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Lebanon Traveler



A publication of Hospitality Services in a joint venture with Beyond Beirut | Issue 23 | Nov 2017 - Apr 2018

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**THE SOUND
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**BEIRUT'S
LATEST
HOT SPOTS**

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Cover photo by Diala Shuhaiber

Diala grew up between London, Tokyo and Madrid, and comes from a mixed Middle Eastern background. With a degree in journalism and a passion for photography, she was inspired to take this shot at the Mir Amin Palace because of the symbolic frame of the Lebanese arched window.

Follow her on

📷 [framewithaview](#)
 ✉ dialas@gmail.com



Photo: Joe Sokhn

Feel free this fall and winter

Having said farewell to summer 2017, we've now welcomed the glorious season of fall and all its wonders. Characterized by much cooler temperatures, it is a truly beautiful time of the year, bringing with it incredible transformations to the natural landscape. Fall is the perfect season to get outdoors and embrace Lebanon's wilder side, with trees swathed in shades of orange, yellow, red and ochre, and rivers and lakes brimming with wildlife. As winter sets in, delicate patches of glistening snow will cap our mountaintops, providing us with an exciting range of activities. This is a remarkable country, as the coming months will once again prove.

When we put together this issue of Lebanon Traveler, we wanted to emphasize the importance of being active and getting the most out of fall and winter. With that in mind, we came up with a mishmash of 20 suggestions for your bucket list. We hope to encourage you to do something a little different over the coming weeks, whether it's biking around Taanayel or visiting the remains of the Dahr el Baidar train station.

This is one of the best times of the year to hike, so with the help of our amazing experts and hiking enthusiasts, we've gathered a selection of trails for you to try out, whatever your ability. In a separate article, we've highlighted five waterfalls around the country that come to life in the winter months. Don't be surprised by the pictures; they really are all in Lebanon!

And in case those rainy days ahead fail to motivate you to get outdoors, we've also taken a quick look at eight fascinating museums in and around Beirut for you to discover. Boasting a wealth of cultural, archaeological and historical gems, they are incredible places that we are truly fortunate to have on our doorstep.

We would like to thank our wonderful contributors who have enriched this final issue of 2017 with their beautiful words and photographs. We look forward to a bright New Year, and to many more Lebanese adventures with you all.

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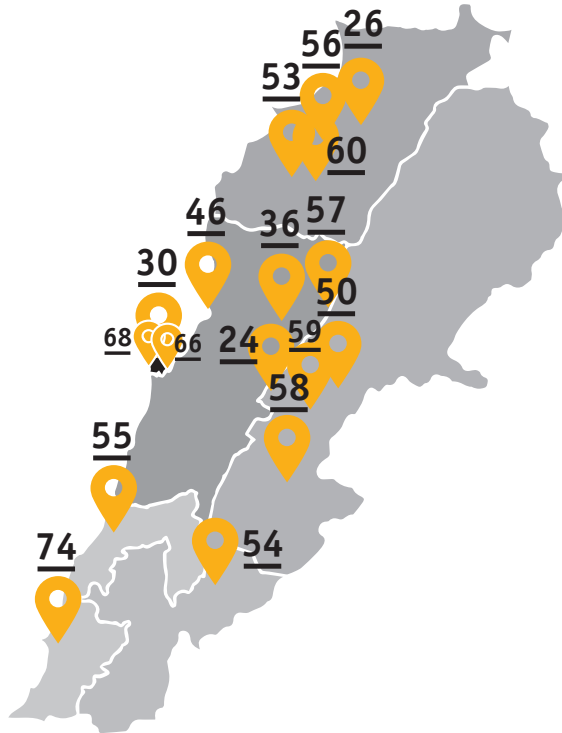
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vamos-todos.com



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Nagham Ghandour

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[Lebanon Stories](https://www.facebook.com/LebanonStories)



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With a background in nutrition, food heritage and tourism, Zeinab developed Darb el Karam, the first food tourism trail in Lebanon, a key program of the Food Heritage Foundation. She is project manager at the LMTA.

food-heritage.org, lebanontrail.org



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Krystel ensures she always quenches her thirst for wandering by exploring Lebanon and the world at large. Full of stories to tell, she launched a travel blog, Notes of a Traveler, which she fills with inspiring travel stories.

[@notes_of_a_traveler](https://www.instagram.com/notes_of_a_traveler) notesofatraveler.com



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elsasattout.com



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We are always delighted to receive articles and pictures from enthusiastic writers and photographers. If you would like to contribute to Lebanon Traveler magazine and lebanontraveler.com, send an email to lt@hospitalityservices.com.lb

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Mövenpick Hotel Beirut is the ultimate destination for business and leisure.

Our fully equipped meeting facilities and exquisite sea view rooms are sure to meet your needs. A unique getaway is best enjoyed by swimming in our outdoor Olympic pool, enjoying a relaxing massage, and savouring an exceptional gastronomic experience.

EDITOR'S PICKS

SURSOCK MUSEUM

A number of exciting exhibitions are currently being held at the Sursock Museum. "Partitions and Colors," by Lebanese artist Amine El Bacha, tackles a number of themes, including abstract, landscapes, religion and music. The exhibition runs until March 12, 2018.

Visitors to the museum can also see the work of Kuwaiti visual artist Monira Al Qadiri in her first solo exhibition. Comprising works in sculpture, video and sound that envisage international diplomacy as an alien conspiracy, Qadiri's exhibition, titled "The Craft," runs until February 5, 2018.

The museum is further hosting the "Fruit of Sleep" exhibition, which artfully explores the concept of sleep and its necessity to achieve a true awakening. Curated by Reem Fadda, it runs until December 31, 2017.

A photography exhibition of pictures taken around the Middle East during the 19th century will also be displayed until February 5, 2018. sursock.museum

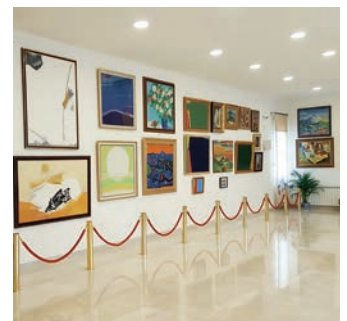


BEIT BEIRUT

For 50 years, the Barakat Building, also known as the "Yellow House," stood on the intersection of Independence Street and Damascus Road in Sodeco. During Lebanon's Civil War, it suffered great damage and was marked for demolition. However, the Lebanese heritage activist group APSAD fought for its preservation and restoration and now the building, Beit Beirut, is an urban-culture museum that celebrates and commemorates the history of Beirut. Beit Beirut recently ran a 40-day art exhibition titled "Sacred Catastrophe: Healing Lebanon," showcasing the work of Zena el Khalil. beitbeirut.org

EMILE HANNOUCHE MUSEUM

Showcasing an exceptional collection of over 900 Lebanese paintings, archaeological artifacts, Japanese prints, Islamic art and unique Melkite pieces, the Emile Hannouche Museum in Chtaura (Bekaa) was inaugurated on September 22, 2017. The museum, a charming white building in the grounds of the Hannouche Casino and Restaurant complex, is open to the public from Wednesday to Friday. 08 540163/03 380037



LATEST BOOK RELEASES

BEIRUT FOOTSTEPS BY MARIE-NOELLE FATTAL

When she noticed that many things she found beautiful, sad, funny or moving in Beirut were threatened to disappear, Marie-Noelle Fattal decided to create "Beirut Footsteps" using social media. This photography book features a selection of her Instagram posts. It also serves as a personal tribute, enabling the author to say: "Beirut, I love you."

A book signing will take place on November 22, 2017, at Liza Restaurant in Achrafieh.



LIZA À LA LIBANAISE

BY LIZA & ZIAD ASSEILY

Featuring 70 Lebanese recipes perfect for brunch, lunch or dinner, with anecdotes about the history of Lebanese gastronomy, this French-language cookbook is a great addition to any library.



MANGER LIBANAIS

BY KAMAL MOUZAWAK

Taking readers on a trip across the country to discover people, landscapes, and the art of good living, there are plenty of delicious recipes to create at home in "Manger Libanais." Look out for the 10 commandments of *tabbouleh*, and the art of modeling *kebbeh*.

ALIVE BY JOUMANA BOU FAKHREDDINE

Focusing on the life and work of Gibran Khalil Gibran, "Alive" is a unique art encyclopedia detailing key moments in Gibran's life. Aptly titled after the famous slogan written on his grave, the book is beautifully presented in two volumes over 18 chapters, which contain precious manuscripts, documentation, paintings, and photographs. Officially launched at the American Embassy of Beirut, "Alive" is an essential reference. gibranalive.com



EVENTS WE LOVED

BEIRUT ART FAIR

Four wonderful days dedicated to the discovery of modern and contemporary art of the Arab world came to a close on September 24, 2017, as Beirut Art Fair celebrated the victories and spoils of a very successful eighth edition. Over 50 exhibitors proudly displayed their works of art to a local and international audience. The fair included "Revealing by SGBL," a section dedicated to the discovery of fresh talent.

beirut-art-fair.com



BEIRUT INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

This year's film festival celebrated 20 years of history on screen at the Metropolis Empire Sofil in Achrafieh. Taking place from October 4-12, 2017, the festival's theme focused on the pressing, yet complex issues facing the world today, such as migration, poverty, war, corruption, racism and human rights. A special two-day tribute was paid to Iranian filmmaker Abbas Kiarostami.

beirutfilmfestival.org



WHISKY LIVE BEIRUT

Bringing more than 50 of the finest international whisky brands and a host of experts from around the world to the capital, Whisky Live Beirut celebrated a successful second edition at Le Yacht Club – Beirut, Zaitunay Bay. The three-day event drew to a close on October 21, 2017, having welcomed over 3,000 whisky enthusiasts. Guests were able to enjoy special masterclasses with brand ambassadors and taste a rare selection of whiskies.

whiskylivebeirut.com



WORLD FOOD DAY AT TAWLET

In collaboration with Spinneys, Tawlet restaurant and ACT NGO (Active Advocacy of Communities for Tomorrow) marked World Food Day on October 16, 2017. A dinner at Tawlet in Mar Mikhael, prepared by Chef Hussein Hadid, was organized as part of the NGO's "ACT 4 Food" activities, a project that raises awareness about the importance of reducing food wastage, reusing and repurposing excess food, and proposing legal by-laws promoting incentives to reduce food wastage within relevant sectors.

Daily, each Spinneys branch provides ACT with 100-120kg of fruits and vegetables in addition to 5-10kg of bakery products that go to local charities.

soukeltayeb.com



BEIRUT DESIGN FAIR

The first edition of Beirut Design Fair came to an end after four days on September 24, 2017. The fair flaunted the country's design scene and highlighted a new generation of talent. All the participants were praised for their innovation and creativity, with the best among them recognized with accolades in three categories: the "Talent Award," the "Object Award" and the "Initiative Award."

beirut-design-fair.com

THE LMT FALL TREK

The annual Fall Trek, organized by the Lebanon Mountain Trail Association (LMTA), drew to a close on October 29, 2017. Offering 120 hikers a unique chance to witness Lebanon's most beautiful areas and the opportunity to enjoy regional cuisine, the trek covered an incredible 250km over 16 days.

lebanontrail.org



BEIRUT RESTAURANTS FESTIVAL

Although the last train left Mar Mikhael station in 1976, the old railway platform is far from derelict today, having been given a new lease of life as a quirky nightlife venue. Revived in 2014, the Trainstation nightspot flaunts its impressive past in the rusting locomotives and partially visible train tracks that have become a talking point among visitors. While some of the country's train stations were demolished during the Civil War, or later bulldozed to make way for highway projects, the Trainstation's resurrection has meant that the landmark can now host a variety of events, such as the Beirut Restaurants Festival, which took place from September 29 until October 1, 2017.

This year's edition of the festival, hosted by the Syndicate of Owners of Restaurants, Cafes, Night-clubs & Pastries, gathered over 60 of the top cafes, bars, eateries and patisseries from across the city to celebrate the best that Lebanese hospitality has to offer.

In partnership with Hospitality Services and sponsored by the Ministry of Tourism, the

event brought together both established names and new start-ups, who served up delicious snack-sized portions to allow festivalgoers the opportunity to try as much variety as possible.

A number of bands and DJs played great music throughout the three-day festival, which kept the nostalgic crowd entertained late into the night and pumped life back into the historic site.



BEIRUT MARATHON

The Blom Bank Beirut Marathon celebrated its 15th edition on November 12, 2017. Bringing participants from all over the world to Lebanon for an exciting day of running, more than 47,000 people took part in a variety of races, including classic, relay and a fun run. beirutmarathon.org



SALON DU LIVRE FRANCOPHONE DE BEYROUTH

Gathering 50 exhibitors, the 24th edition of the Salon du Livre Francophone de Beyrouth wrapped up on November 12, 2017. The book fair attracted visitors of all ages, who were able to exchange books and explore a vast selection of themes.



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SUPPORTED LIVCD PROJECT TO PROMOTE RURAL TOURISM

An exciting new project has been launched by the USAID supported LIVCD project with the support of Lebanon Traveler to promote 18 MSMEs working in the rural tourism value chain in Lebanon. Providing valuable marketing tools to increase stakeholders' access to the market, the beneficiaries include: Darb el Karam, Ehden Forest Nature Reserve, Auberge Beity Association, Travelwise, Society for the Protection of Nature in Lebanon (SPNL), Tannourine Cedar Nature Reserve, Wada, Friends of Nature Association, Ras el Maten Youth Organization and Ras el Maten Municipality, Arc en Ciel – Women Empowerment Center in Taanayel, Ecolodge Tanail, Maghdouche Municipality, Spéléo Club Du Liban, Slow Food Beirut, Municipality of Zahle, Rachaya el Wadi Municipality, Ghineh Guesthouse and Menjez Municipality.

الصحة بتليق لسُفرتنا



sohat®

LT wish list

Looking for a unique gift? Check out these must-haves, with an all-important Lebanese twist



BEAU-TIE

Complete your outfit with this vintage bowtie. Handmade using old Lebanese banknotes and wood, it's a one-of-a-kind item designed by Ibrahim Kastoun for those who appreciate the good old days! 112,500 LBP (75 USD), © bob.kastoun

BRACELET

Guaranteed to make you feel that extra bit closer to Lebanon, this gorgeous bracelet is a perfect statement piece for the fashion-savvy. Made of brass with 18K gold plating, it's part of the "Bracelets with a Message" collection from Scene Beirut. 75,000 LBP (50 USD), scenebeirut.com



CHOCOLIVE

Enjoy the wonderful taste of caramelized olives dipped in dark chocolate from House of Zejd, specialists in premium quality olive derivative products. 70,000 LBP (46.67 USD), zejd.net

BEGLERI

The begleri originated in Greece as an adaptation of the *masbahah* and we love this slick creation by Lebanese architect and designer Elie Metni. Available in brushed stainless steel and polished brass. 120,000 LBP (80 USD), eliemetni.com



ZAATAR

Feel that extra bit closer to nature with the delicious selection of organically-grown wild Lebanese thyme products from The Good Thymes. 15,000-30,000 LBP (10-20 USD), thegoodthymes.me



SCENTED SOAPS

Handcrafted by local artisans, fill your bathroom with these lovely scented soaps from Senteurs d'Orient. Tasting box of nine mini ma'amoul soaps 43,500 LBP (29 USD) Set of three ma'amoul scented soaps 23,000 LBP (15.5 USD), lb.senteursdorient.com

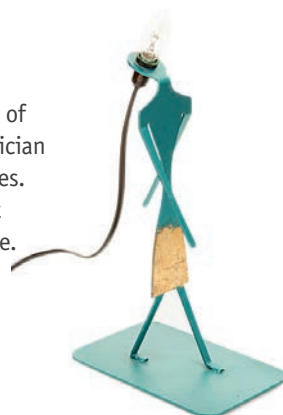
TISSUE BOX & COFFEE CUPS

Add an Oriental touch to your home with these decorative items from Images d'Orient. Tin containing two Arabic coffee cups, 30,000 LBP (20 USD) Tissue box "Birds of Paradise" collection 20,000 LBP (13.3 USD), imagesdorient.com



PHOENICIAN LAMP

Combining modern art with a touch of history to light the way, this Phoenician lamp is made of steel and gold leaves. Designed by B Deco, it's the perfect addition to a desk or a bedside table. 75,000 LBP (50 USD), lebanesedesigners.com



TEA BOX

We just adore this plexi-glass tea box from B Deco that looks like a *tarbouch*. A novel accessory to your table, invite your friends over for a cup of tea and a step back in time. 52,500 LBP (35 USD), lebanesedesigners.com



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YOUSSEF EL KHAL

Lebanon is a subject close to **Youssef el Khal's** heart. This year, the renowned actor founded the NGO "Awal Marra" and walked the country's shoreline in a symbolic gesture to boost blood donations for the Lebanese Red Cross. In an exclusive interview with Elsa Yazbeck Charabati, he tells more

YOUR CAREER PATH HAS BEEN AN INTERESTING ONE. TELL US ABOUT IT.

In 1993, when I was only 15, I took part in a series called "Mada el 3omor" (For a Lifetime), which was directed by Marwan Najjar and starred Elsy Fernayni. We were youngsters, Bassem el Riyyeh and Viviane Antonios to mention a couple of names, who went on to become the current generation of actors. It was a memorable first experience. Acting happened by chance; I didn't want to become an actor at all! I graduated as a graphic designer and I wanted to work in that field, but I was taken to a different world - the world of modeling. I did 63 ads for some of the most important products on the market, including Pepsi, Nouba, Crunch, Perlex and Kodak. I got used to the set, the shootings, even the terms like "close shot" and "wide angle." And then came my first real TV opportunity, namely "Tlet Banet" on MTV. I did three or four seasons and got hooked. I realized then that I loved the field, more so because the audience loved it too.

SO THIS IS HOW YOUR CAREER BEGAN?

Indeed, I didn't work in graphic design. I started acting, but I didn't always get great opportunities. In parallel, I worked at the stock exchange for 12 years. I was successful there, but I was like a bird in a cage. I got the opportunity to fly out of this cage when Oussama el Rahbani asked me to act in his play "Akher Yaoum" (Romeo and Juliet) in 2004. From that point I became increasingly sought after and got more important roles.

WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR FAVORITE PROJECT TO DATE?

There is no best project. There are some

projects I regret having done, but I was young and it was only the beginning. The good thing though is that people saw in me a rising star from the beginning, maybe because my mind was culturally and artistically ready from day one. I was born into a family where culture and arts are key words; with my father Youssef el Khal, a famous poet and writer, and my mother Maha Bayrakdar a painter, our house was always full of artists and writers. That's why I always knew what to read, who to work with, whom to choose as a director. And guess what? I made my own project template with the "two out of three rule," which means that I have to find two good things out of three in order to accept a project. For example, if the role and the salary are good I take it, even if the director is not excellent.

HAVE THERE BEEN ANY PROJECTS WHERE YOUR RULE APPLIED THREE OUT OF THREE?

Yes, in many series such as "Laou" and "Wa Ashrakat el Shams," where I had a good scenario, a great role and an excellent technical team, along with a good salary.

“ OVER THE YEARS I'VE TRIED TO WATER MY EGO BUT IT REFUSES TO GROW! ”

DO YOU FIND SOME PEOPLE DIFFICULT TO WORK WITH?

Yes, but I won't name any. There are a few actresses I used to act with who

don't interest me anymore, and some people whose egos have grown so big that it's impossible to work with them. They're full of themselves. It's weird how over the years I've tried to water my ego but it refuses to grow!

DO YOU THINK THIS IS ONE OF THE REASONS PEOPLE ADMIRE YOU?

I hope so, and I hate it when I hear people saying: "It seems that Youssef el Khal is too proud of himself." I assure them that I'm still the same.

WHAT ARE YOUR CURRENT PROJECTS?

I have a new series called "Hawa Assfar" (Yellow Wind) with Sulafa. It is a Syrian production and the shooting is taking place in both Syria and Lebanon.

DO YOU FEEL MORE LEBANESE OR SYRIAN?

I'm 100% Lebanese. I belong to Lebanon - I love Lebanon, I'm passionate about it. I live here and will die here, but the Syrian part I took from my mom does exist. When I go to Damascus I also feel at home. I have a magnetic relationship with the place and the Syrians always welcome me with enthusiasm as "Maha's son." Ward, my sister, is also well known there, but ultimately, I remain Lebanese.

HOW IMPORTANT IS IT THAT YOUR SISTER PAVED THE WAY FOR YOU?

Ward was already a star before I started, and she supported me a lot with her contacts, PR and such. I love her so much, but she couldn't hold my hand all the time and I had to work hard. Having such an artistic heritage helps, although it's also challenging. My dad wasn't just any poet or writer; the translation of both the Bible and "The Prophet"



as well as the publication of a poetry magazine are among his many lifetime accomplishments. Hence, I always want to meet the bar he set so high.

YOU TOO WRITE POEMS...

Yes, I do. I have a book that will be published in December 2018 to commemorate the 30th anniversary of my father's passing, which coincides with the centenary of his birth. It's going to be something different, very artistic and out of the box. I want the new generation to discover my father's works. To mark this, and as a tribute to my father, I'll offer the audience my book "3ala el Khota" (In the Footsteps).

YOU HAVE A STRONG CONNECTION WITH LEBANON. WHAT IS IT ABOUT THIS COUNTRY THAT YOU FIND SPECIAL?

Everything about Lebanon is special. It is so important to me that I've launched an NGO called "Awwal Marra" (First Time) and for its first event I walked along the entire shoreline of Lebanon, from Arida to Nakoura, to call for blood donations for the Red Cross. Can you

“ MY PARENTS CHALLENGED ALL THE TABOOS THAT STILL SHAKE LEBANESE SOCIETY ”

imagine how symbolic this is, to gather blood from different Lebanese citizens across all the entire country, regardless of their religion or confession? Moreover, I'm someone who hates walking so challenging myself to walk the 247km in just five days was my way of offering something to my country and to my roots.

WHERE ARE YOU ORIGINALLY FROM?

I'll tell you a funny story; I don't know where I am from exactly because my mom is a Sunni Syrian from Damascus, while my dad is a Protestant Christian from Wadi el Nasara, a region in North Lebanon considered part of Syria before Lebanon gained independence. My parents had a civil marriage, had us baptized as Maronites and registered us in Ras Beirut. I was born in Sarba but lived in Ghazir. In a nutshell, I don't know where I am from! However, I know one thing - my parents challenged all the taboos that still shake Lebanese society. That's why I feel I am versatile.

WHERE DO YOU LIKE TO RELAX?

In the Maldives, in Florence... I like the sea, but I also love the mountains. In Lebanon my favorite places would be Ehmej and Laklouk. I don't like socially-exposed places. I like being close to nature, with true friends, far from high-tech artificial spots.

YOU ARE MARRIED TO SINGER AND ACTRESS NICOLE SABA. DOES THE FACT THAT YOU BOTH WORK IN SHOW BUSINESS MAKE LIFE EASIER?

A journalist once wrote that Youssef el Khal and Nicole Saba is a difficult equation. Experiences like ours are rare in the Arab world, but Nicole and I are not workaholics. Together we always analyze every project before taking

it; she gives me advice and I do the same. We are complementary, and sentimental balance is very important in one's life. Family is an even a better balance, a springboard.

YOU RECENTLY TURNED 40. DO YOU CONSIDER IT A MILESTONE?

I feel I stepped from the stage of building to that of enjoying. I am in the future; it is a new step - the step of accomplishing the things that I started. If I want to leave a footprint, it's now that I should do it! I think it's nice to leave something to posterity. Educating my daughter is such a valuable thing for me, and maybe having a second child too. Turning 40 is definitely a time to start doing something valuable.

@youssefelkhal

YOUSSEF'S PICKS

Where to enjoy Lebanese mezze:
Al Halabi

Wine: Ksara, because it's fruity and Chbat, because of the rare bottles.

Spot to hang out with friends:
Definitely home! It's the best place with total freedom. We have it all: playing, eating, drinking, singing, reading poems, and discussing different topics with my friends, from 9 PM until 5 AM!

Outdoor activities: Not walking, that's for sure! I'm a professional ping-pong player so I enjoy that.

Things about Lebanon: I love this country - I love its sun and I love its mountains. Sunbathing in Laklouk is amazing. I absorb all the energy I need from the sun.



LE BRISTOL

BEYROUTH

LE MARCHÉ DE NOËL
CHRISTMAS SQUARE

Make a Wish

LE BRISTOL HOTEL - Verdun

30
November
3
December

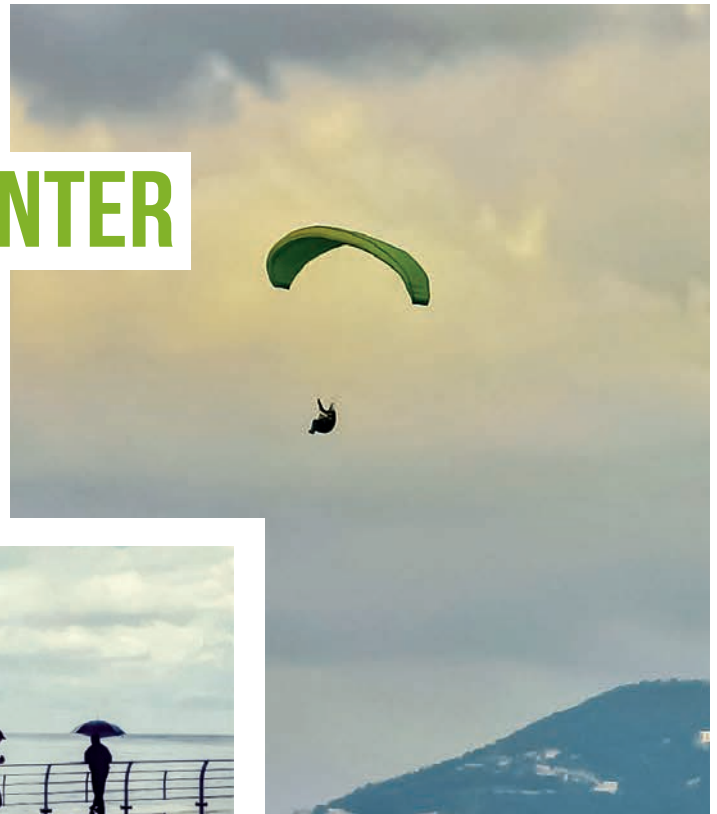
Thursday
6 - 9 pm
Friday-Sunday
11 am - 9 pm

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01 351400

20 IDEAS FOR YOUR WINTER BUCKET LIST

Think you've done it all? Here are 20 ideas by **Nidal Majdalani** to inspire you to travel beyond your comfort zone this season



1. JOG IN THE RAIN

With a new season comes a change in the weather. Enjoy the sensation of jogging along Beirut's Corniche from Ain el Mreisseh to the Manara lighthouse under the gentle rain for a truly invigorating experience. The epic sea view will motivate you to push on through.

2. PARAGLIDE OVER THE BAY OF JOUNIEH

If you're a bit of a thrill seeker, try your hand at paragliding. Club Thermique (03 933359, clubthermique.org) offers a number of paragliding services at different sites across Lebanon, one of the most popular being the route from Ghosta down towards the bay of Jounieh.



3. EXPLORE THE CANA GROTTO

Located in South Lebanon, Cana is famous for its history and for being an important place of pilgrimage. A number of natural caves bearing old inscriptions can be found in the village and it is said that Jesus' first miracle took place in one of these caves. The warm spiritual atmosphere of Cana is one that can be embraced by visitors of all faiths.



4. ADMIRE BEIRUT'S STREET ART

It's difficult to walk around the capital without stumbling across some funky street art that's worth admiring. Gemmayze and Mar Mikhael are particularly artsy so keep your camera handy and wander around the narrow lanes and up the numerous staircases.

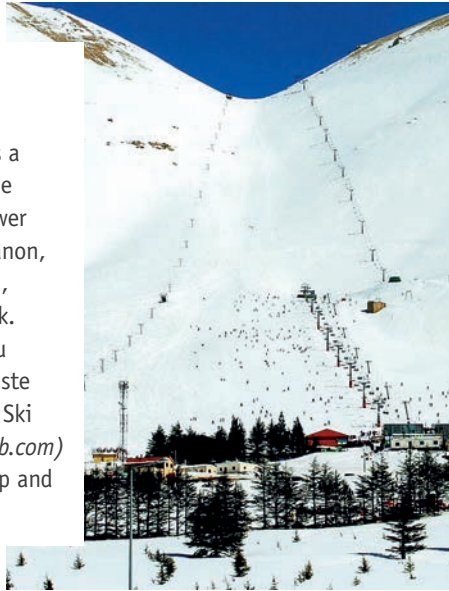


5. WATCH SHIP BUILDERS AT WORK

The tradition of shipbuilding is one that dates back to ancient times in Lebanon. Tripoli became a center for the trade during the Umayyad period (circa 650 A.D.) and remains one of the most important shipbuilding locations. Tyre is another place where visitors can witness firsthand the skill of these remarkable craftsmen.

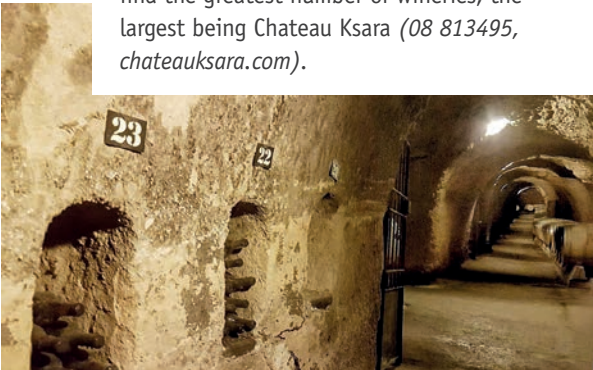
6. SKI LIKE THERE'S NO TOMORROW

The winter season provides a great opportunity to hit the slopes and there are no fewer than six ski resorts in Lebanon, including Mzaar Kfardebian, Zaarour, Cedars and Laklouk. Even if you're a novice, you can still find the perfect piste to have some fun. Contact Ski Lebanon (70 103222, skileb.com) for help in organizing a trip and arranging lessons.



8. GO WINE TASTING

There are some 50 wineries dotted around the country producing more than 600,000 cases of wine per annum, which means plenty of wine tasting! While a number of red wine varieties are produced here, such as Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon, Lebanon is home to the indigenous white grapes: Obaideh and Merwah. You can visit a selection of boutique wineries in Batroun or head to the Bekaa where you'll find the greatest number of wineries, the largest being Chateau Ksara (08 813495, chateauksara.com).



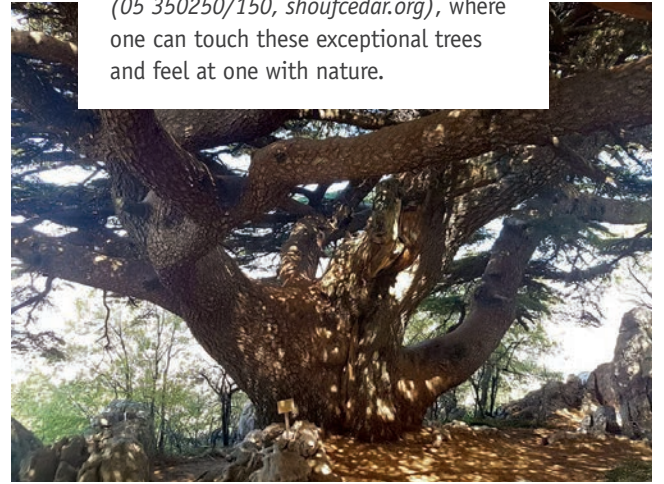
10. GET ON A BIKE

Biking has become an increasingly popular means of exploring Lebanon's towns and villages. A great place to visit by bike is Deir Taanayel in the Bekaa, with its picturesque scenery and unique wildlife. Refer to page 59 for more on the area.



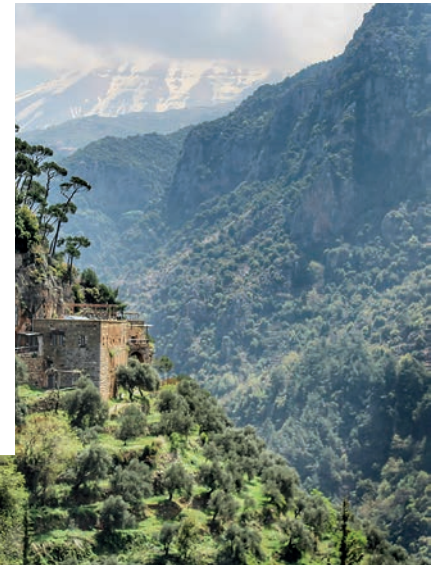
7. WANDER THROUGH THE CEDAR FORESTS

Symbolic to all Lebanese, the magnificent cedar tree tells an incredible story of Lebanon. The oldest documented forests in the world, Lebanon's cedars were first mentioned in records dating back to 3000 B.C. There are several beautiful forests like the Al Shouf Nature Reserve (05 350250/150, shoufcedar.org), where one can touch these exceptional trees and feel at one with nature.



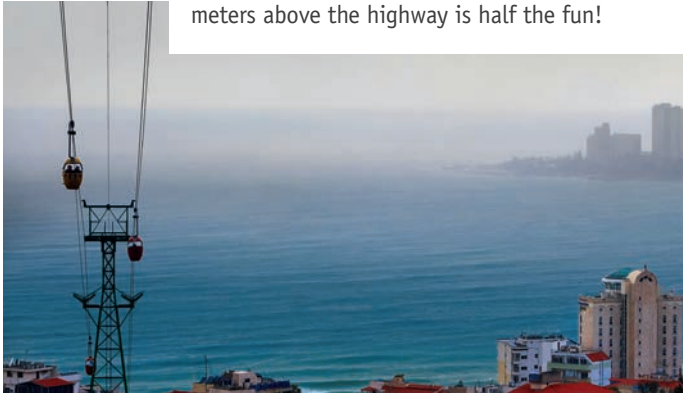
9. HIKE SOMEWHERE MAGNIFICENT

Lebanon is blessed with a unique topography, making it a wonderful hiking destination. There are countless trails of varying levels of difficulty throughout the country which can be enjoyed year round. One of the most breathtaking hikes is in the holy valley of Qannoubine. For other hiking ideas, refer to page 38.



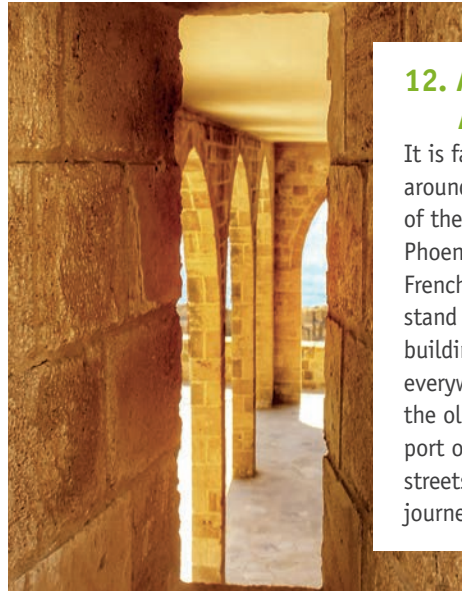
11. TAKE THE TELEFERIQUE

You don't have to be a tourist to appreciate one of the most visited attractions in Lebanon. Jump on the Teleferique (09 936075, teleferique.lb.com) for an exhilarating nine-minute cable car ride through Jounieh up to Harissa. Dangling hundreds of meters above the highway is half the fun!



12. APPRECIATE OLD ARCHITECTURE

It is fascinating to walk around and see remnants of the nation's rich past. Phoenician, Ottoman and French architectural gems stand alongside modern buildings pretty much everywhere. Wander around the old souk of Saïda, the old port of Byblos or the cobbled streets of Batroun for a journey back in time.

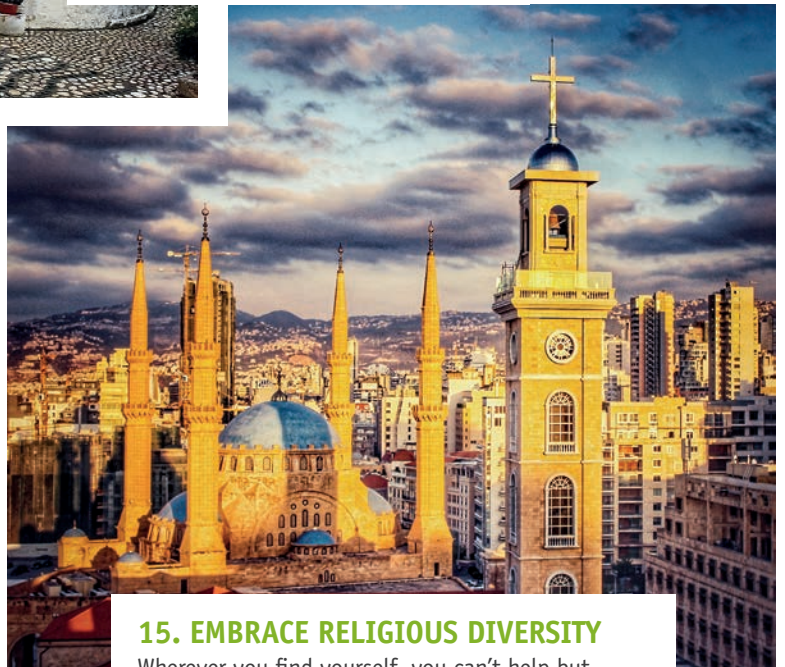
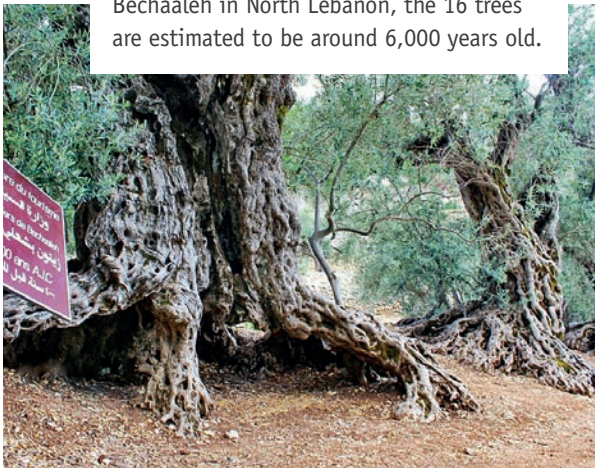


13. VISIT THE VILLAGE OF SCULPTURES

If you thought museums were all indoors, think again! Rachana, in North Lebanon, is home to a charming open-air sculpture museum created by the Basbous brothers. Upon entering the village, you will be struck by the number of sculptures on the road, in front of houses and in gardens. The smurf-like residence of the Basbous family is also not to be missed.

14. SEE THE WORLD'S OLDEST OLIVE TREES

The Olive Trees of Noah, also known as "The Sisters," are the world's oldest olive trees. Located in the sleepy hamlet of Bechaaleh in North Lebanon, the 16 trees are estimated to be around 6,000 years old.



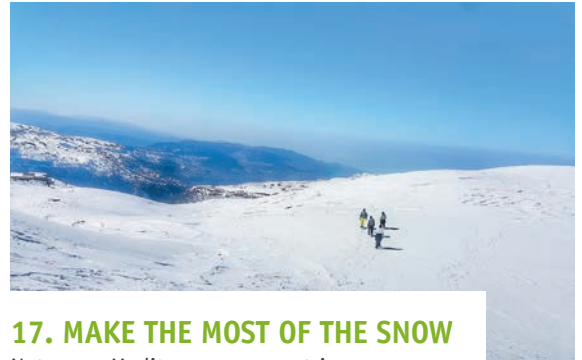
15. EMBRACE RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY

Wherever you find yourself, you can't help but notice religious diversity. Mosques, maqams and churches can be found within meters of one another, making Lebanon a paradigm of coexistence. Take time to embrace this side of the country.



16. EXPERIENCE LIFE WITH THE LOCALS

Traditional methods of farming are still practiced in Lebanon's rural areas. Learn a thing or two about herding by spending time with local shepherds in places such as Haddath el Jebbeh.



17. MAKE THE MOST OF THE SNOW

Not many Mediterranean countries experience snow in the wintertime and all the fantastic outdoor activities that go with it. From snowmobiling to snowshoeing, Lebanon has it all so grab a few friends and get active!



18. TAKE A ROAD TRIP

Given its compact size, Lebanon lends itself perfectly to epic road trips. Hit the road from Zahle to Bikfaya where you'll see the magnificent Sannine Mountain along the way.

19. CAPTURE THE OLD TRAIN STATION

The Dahr el Baidar station in Mount Lebanon was built in 1895, but stopped operating in 1976 due to the Lebanese Civil War. Today, visitors can wander around its eerie remains and observe what is left of the old tunnel.

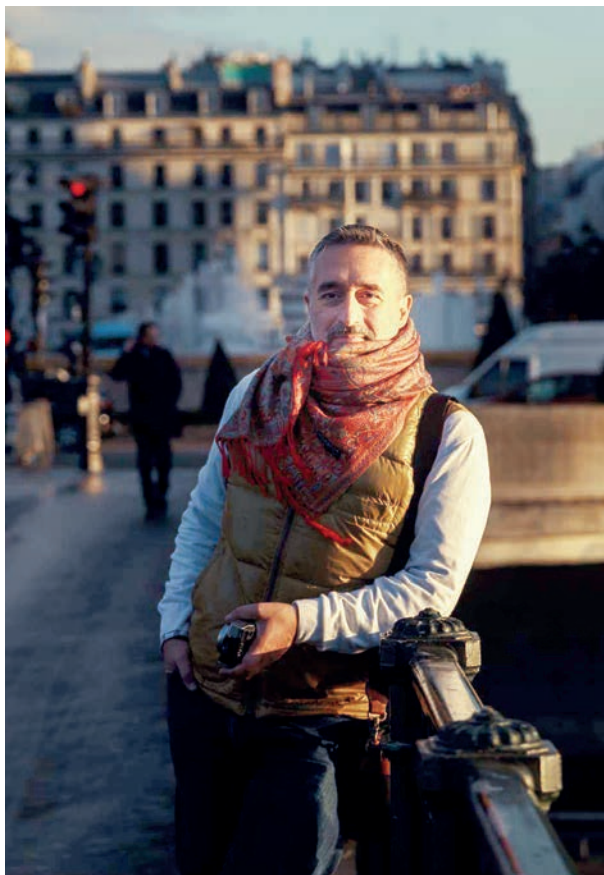
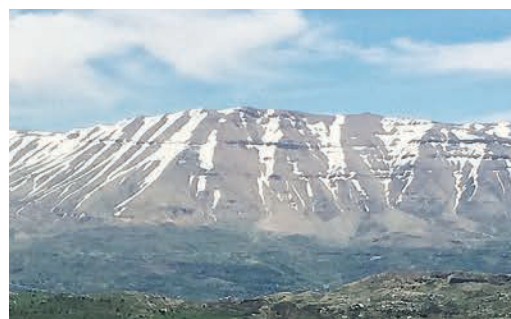


20. GET CLOSER TO NATURE

One of the most incredible things about Lebanon is its wildlife. The country possesses rich ecosystems that must be enjoyed responsibly such as the Ammiq Wetlands, a stunning area which is well known for attracting migratory birds.

Photos:  [nidal.majdalani](#)  [Nidal Majdalani](#)

FALLING FOR LEBANON



Author and journalist **Warren Singh-Bartlett** arrived in Lebanon in May 1998 on what was supposed to be a brief sightseeing trip. Nineteen years on, he's still here. In a candid interview, he talks about his relationship with Beirut and his latest book

There is no question that Warren Singh-Bartlett is passionate about Lebanon. The author has spent the best part of two decades living in Beirut, where he has successfully released two books about the country. He is not shy in admitting, however, that his unlikely love affair with Lebanon happened by pure chance. "I originally washed up here in 1998 on what was supposed to be a three-day visit to Beirut, Byblos and Baalbeck. I arrived overland from Syria as I was backpacking at the time, ostensibly on my way to China where I planned to work as a journalist," he recounts. Making the hop across to Lebanon from Syria seemed like a good idea to the adventurous traveler, who assumed he had nothing to lose from a

quick side-trip before resuming his trip north to the Caucasus and then into Central Asia. But things did not entirely go to plan and Singh-Bartlett soon found himself captivated, particularly by the capital. "I fell in love with Beirut the minute I first saw it and so I never left," he confesses.

In 2010, he released his book "Bet You Didn't Know This About Beirut!" full of quirky facts and anecdotes about the city. "I started writing guide books in 2007, and from that came this idea of writing something about Beirut, a place which is so close to my heart." In his book, Singh-Bartlett touches upon the culture and complex history of Beirut in an artfully entertaining manner, making "Bet You Didn't Know This About Beirut!" a fun



Singh-Bartlett's affinity with Lebanon is inspiring to the point that one forgets he is not Lebanese. He talks of his "stubborn desire" to see the country get back on its feet and re-establish itself as a Mediterranean paradise. "For a small part of the world, Lebanon packs a disproportionate punch thanks to its

position, lengthy history and cultural diversity. I find it endlessly fascinating, despite the many, many drawbacks there are to life here. Most other countries seem terribly boring in comparison!"

"Getting Lost in Lebanon" is available in bookshops around Lebanon and online through Amazon, Bookwitty and FNAC.

“ I FELL IN LOVE WITH BEIRUT THE MINUTE I SAW IT AND SO I NEVER LEFT ”



WARREN'S FAVORITES

Lebanese dish

I've yet to find a Lebanese dish I haven't liked - well, maybe *makdoos* - but I've never much cared for pickles, anywhere. I'm a sucker for *kebbeh*, and it's the reason I stopped being a vegetarian for many years. I also love, love, love *hindbeh*, with a splash of lemon and a drizzle of olive oil. But if forced to choose one dish in particular I'd have to say *kishk*, which I love in all its forms.

Store

I suppose if there is one store I really like and actually shop at it's probably **Papercup**. I can have holes in my socks and nothing but *bulghari* cheese and few dried-out olives in the fridge, but I can never be without a book.

Bar

I don't really go out to bars. Visually I love both **Salon Beyrouth** and **Anise**, the former for its art-deco chic, the latter because it used to remind me of my grandmother's living room. Both do cracking cocktails. Apart from that, I'd probably say one of the beach bars, either **Cloud 59** or **Colonel Brewery**.

Coffee shop

These change with the same frequency as my favorite restaurant. Currently, it's **Kalei**

Coffee Co. in deepest Mar Mikhael. I love the space, love the coffee, love the flourless chocolate cake, love sitting under the trees and love the fact that it's five minutes down the stairs from my flat!

Hidden gem

There's barely a place in Lebanon that doesn't inspire me, as you'll discover if you've a read of my book, "Getting Lost in Lebanon." This country is packed full of incredible, inspiring and usually overlooked spots. But, to be more precise, Ijra al-Qa'ala in the hinterlands of Dennyeh, the tranquil little temple at Ain Harsha on the flanks of Jabal al-Sheikh and a tiny, hidden pebble beach cove somewhere near Byblos, which nobody knows, is always empty and whose location I am never going to reveal!

Place to unwind

If not at home, which is also a place of work so it isn't always relaxing, I love the mountains. Walking, hiking, lying under trees in the soft spring grass or hanging from them in a hammock in the summer. I love watching the sunset in the mountains as well, whether it's from the Col des Cedres, Beiteddine or the foothills of Jabal al-Sheikh.

and light-hearted read for tourists and Lebanese alike.

His most recent project is a part guide, part photo book titled "Getting Lost in Lebanon." Chronicling Singh-Bartlett's journey around Lebanon, it contains more than 150 pictures, some of which he captured during a month-long walk with the Lebanon Mountain Trail in April 2016. Although the photos were intended for his Instagram feed, he decided to publish them after a number of his followers commented that they would like to see the images in print. "What you will find illustrates purely personal interests, which tend towards Lebanon's wilder places, its architecture and history," he says.



Aiming to protect nature, birds and biodiversity in Lebanon, and to promote the sustainable use of natural resources with people through the revival of the Hima concept, the Society for the Protection of Nature in Lebanon (SPNL) explains more about its "Hima to Hima" program in the Bekaa

The Hima approach is a traditional, community-based method for the conservation of natural resources that have been prevalent in the Arabian Peninsula for more than 1,500 years. In recent times, the Hima approach has witnessed a revival as a complementary means of safeguarding protected areas. Indeed, Lebanon has witnessed the establishment of 19 Himas over the last 12 years alone.

In order to ensure the involvement of local communities in the sustainable management of their sites and natural resources, SPNL introduced responsible tourism under the Hima umbrella to a variety of communities in the Bekaa, offering them valuable training to enhance their skills and serve as

income-generating opportunities. Locals were provided with education on topics such as ecotourism, outdoor-activity safety, astronomy and stargazing, connecting with nature through discovering the shepherd trail, and guide training.

KHERBET KANAFAR

Hima Kherbet Kanafar is located on the eastern slopes of the Shouf Mountain range, overlooking the stunning Bekaa Valley. It is one of the top priority sites for conservation and Hima revival in Lebanon given that it is situated in the middle of the Shouf Biosphere Cedar Reserve, the Ammiq Wetlands and Qaraoun Lake, all identified and approved as Important Bird Areas (IBAs).



THINGS TO DO

There are a variety of activities visitors can enjoy in Hima Kherbet Kanafar.

Hike along the shepherd trail, meet the shepherds and learn about herding. The 4km trail, which is moderate and takes around two hours to complete, begins in Kherbet Kanafar and ends in Ain Zebde. For guide services contact Elie Karam (70 108285).

Spend time bird watching in Kherbet Kanafar and Ain Zebde. You can arrange a guide by contacting Toni Hasbani (70 848856).

Get active! The **West Bekaa Country Club** offers fun activities such as archery, biking, rope activities and climbing. Contact Toni Hasbani (70 848856) for further information.

Enjoy wine tasting at **Chateau Qanafar**, a small family-owned winery. Contact Hiba Salloum (03 027329) for details.

WHERE TO EAT

Have a traditional Lebanese breakfast with the Karam family, prepared using local dairy products. Contact Josephine Karam (76 827366) for details.

Part of the Souk el Tayeb family, **Tawlet Ammiq** was created to protect the natural and cultural heritage of the region, celebrate food and traditions that unite the communities there and support small-scale farmers and producers. The farmer's kitchen offers a weekend buffet with a broad selection of traditional Lebanese dishes. 03 004481, soukeltayeb.com

WHERE TO SLEEP

To extend your stay in the area, head to the **West Bekaa Country Club**. The Mediterranean-style property is a peaceful retreat, offering 54 modern rooms and bungalows and a range of leisure facilities. Some of the rooms overlook the Barouk Mountains. 08 645601/03 485695, wbcbekaa.com

5 THINGS TO DO IN SIR EL DENNIYEH

Voted by L'Orient Le Jour readers as their favorite Lebanese village for 2017, this picturesque beauty spot has plenty to offer visitors. Together with **Rana Tanissa** from Lebanon Untravelled, we've come up with five reasons to explore this northern gem

Sir el Dennyeh is located in North Lebanon, just 12km from Tripoli. Perched 950m above sea level, it is a village admired for its magnificent landscapes and natural resources. Its underground water reservoirs are known to be the largest not only in Lebanon but across the entire Middle East. There are also more than 200 springs reaching as high as 1,713m above sea level. Given that the land is highly fertile, the economy of Sir el Dennyeh relies largely on agriculture.

1. ZAHLAN GROTTTO

It only takes a few steps into the Zahlan grotto for the natural beauty of the mesmerizing calcite formations that cover most of the walls and the ceiling to take effect. Set in strata of calcium and dolomites, the Zahlan cave belongs to the late Jurassic period. It is considered to be the largest in the region, measuring 200m and consisting of three parts: the current cave, a lower cave and a third cave at the bottom of the valley, where the Zahlan fountain gushes out.

The discovery of human skeletons, animal bones and tools dating back to the New Stone Age indicate that the grotto was once inhabited.

To visit the cave call 70 322999.



Photo: Rana Tanissa



Photo: Mark Aoun

2. SFIREH TEMPLE

The Sfireh Temple, one of the largest of its kind in Lebanon, was constructed in the second century A.D. during the reign of the Roman Emperor Septimius Severus, who is believed to have lived there for four years. After several phonetic adaptations from Severus to Sfeirus, the temple became commonly known as Sfireh.

Measuring 30m by 15m, the rectangular-shaped temple is almost completely intact, with the exception of the roof. The facade has three main doors, the middle one being the largest and the only door that is decorated. The door to the left leads to the terraces of the temple, while the right one leads to a crypt. Visitors will notice ancient Greek writing on parts of the rock.



Photo: Jubran Elias

3. QASR EL AHLAM

True to its name, Qasr el Ahlam is a real “Palace of Dreams,” built by Lebanese visionary Mohamed al Hawchar. Covered with colored stones collected from around the world, the palace took an incredible 25 years to complete. The result is a true work of art that bears some similarity to Gaudi’s renowned Park Guell in Barcelona.

Surprisingly, Qasr el Ahlam is a gem in the village of Bakhoun that not many people are aware of, making it an absolute must for visitors to Dennyeh. For more information contact Talal Hawchar (03 511278).

4. BIKING

For those who enjoy cycling, the scenery throughout the trail is captivating. The journey begins on the agricultural roads in Bqaa Safrine and continues through cypress and oak forests, where you can enjoy the serenity of nature. The trail peaks at 1,000m above sea level, an area often covered in snow during the winter months. Given the difficulty of certain sections, a professional mountain bike is essential.



Photo: Mark Aoun

WHERE TO SLEEP

Hotel Jazar, also known as **Syr Palace Hotel**, is located right in the heart of the village. The pink 1930s building is beautifully preserved, offering guests a choice of 24 charming rooms where they can enjoy a truly unique experience of traveling back in time to a golden era.
 06 490202, sypalacehotel.com

WHERE TO EAT

Serving typical Lebanese mezze, **Faysal Raad Restaurant** is a great lunch option. Ask for a table overlooking the water when booking.
 06 490699

About Nawas also serves Lebanese cuisine and is known for its panoramic view.
 06 491555

5. ENJOY LOCAL PRODUCE

Sir el Dennyeh is well known for its delicious fruits and vegetables, which grow abundantly on the fertile land. It is also an area famous for dairy products. Be sure not to miss the local specialty *halawat el rizz*, generously stuffed with cheese. The rice flour is not only cooked for four hours, it is also beaten by hand for another hour to give it its mouthwatering consistency. The result is a *lokhoun*-like texture that is simply irresistible!



lebanonuntravelled.com

CASCADING BEAUTIES

During late winter and spring, the hypnotic sound of pulsating water can be heard in the mountains and valleys of Lebanon. Biodiversity conservationist **Elsa Sattout** takes us on a journey to discover five of the country's most striking waterfalls



Photo: Jubran Elias

BAAKLINE

District: Shouf

Altitude: 850m

The capital of Mount Lebanon until the early 17th century, Baakline is a mountainous oasis known for its blue waterfalls. Recognized as a hidden gem in Shouf district, the falls are located 45km southeast of Beirut.

Be sure to visit the **Old Serail**, which is now **Baakline National Library**, the **Al Hamadeh Palace** and the **Church of Mar Elias**, built in 1753. For a traditional meal, drop by **Chalalat al Zarka Restaurant** (05 301149/03 260619).

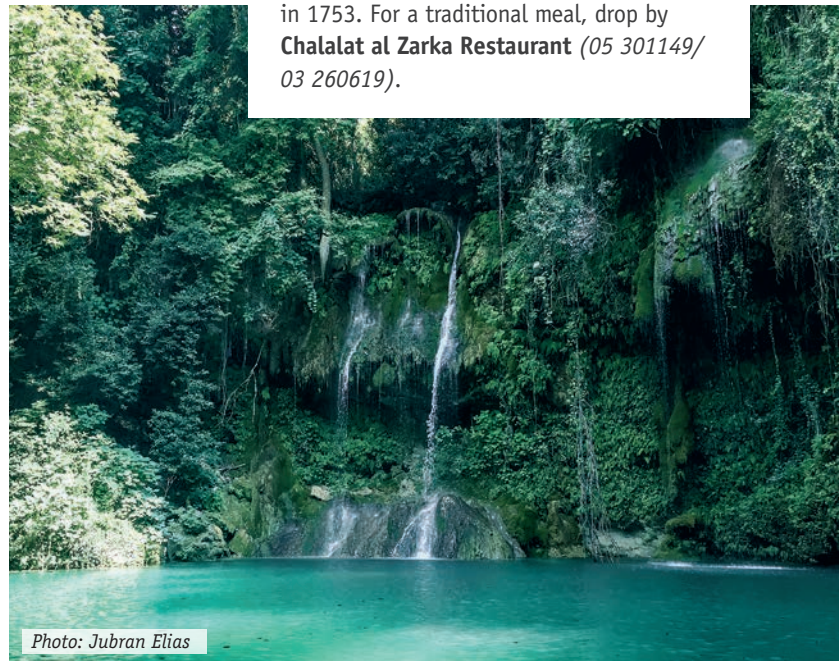


Photo: Jubran Elias

AFQA

District: Jbeil

Altitude: 1,200m

Located 75km northeast of Beirut, around 20km from the ancient city of Byblos, the word Apeca, or Afeka, was interpreted as "source" and affiliated to the birth and death of Adonis at the foot of the waterfalls, where Lake Yammouneh is formed. Gushing out of a limestone cave in the cliff wall almost 200m above the ground, the waterfalls are at the source of the River Adonis (Nahr Ibrahim).

The ruins of the celebrated **Temple of Aphrodite** can also be found in the area.



Photo: Nidal Majdalani

BAATARA

District: Batroun

Altitude: 1,200m

Dropping 225m over three natural bridges, the waterfalls of Baatara were discovered by French speleologist Henri Coiffait in 1952. Also known as Balou Bala, the falls are located in Tannourine and can be reached from Byblos, Batroun or Chekka. A popular destination for nature lovers, the bridges come alive in early spring when they are covered in vegetation. Indeed, the Baatara waterfalls draw in a large number of international visitors as well as local outdoor enthusiasts. The penetrating sound of the melting snow gushing into the sinkhole also attracts hikers along the Lebanon Mountain Trail.

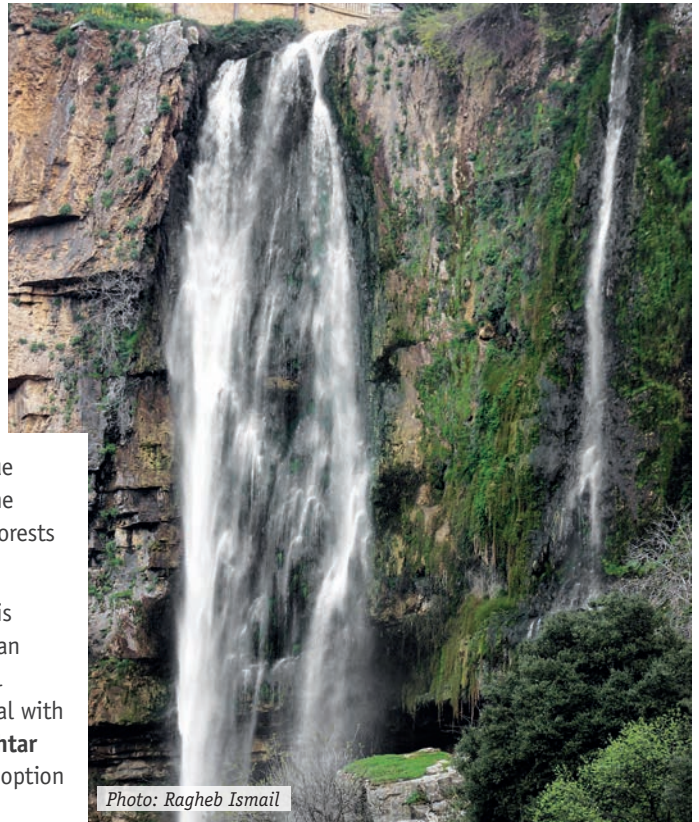


Photo: Ragheb Ismail

JEZZINE

District: Jezzine

Altitude: 950m

Earning Jezzine the title of “City of Falls,” the falls are a true landmark. Located 40km south of Beirut, the town lies in the heart of the district, which is renowned for the stone pine forests covering its slopes.

If you’re visiting the falls, a walk in the old town and souk is the best way to enjoy traditional architecture and provides an opportunity to buy small souvenirs of handmade, traditional cutlery and daggers with decorative inlays. For a typical meal with a view of the falls, try **Al Chalouf** (07 781774) and **Al Mokhtar Restaurant** (07 230 012). If you fancy seafood, there’s the option of **Al Rayyan Cafe** in the old street (07 781368).



Photo: Ragheb Ismail

QANNOUBINE

District: Bcharre

Altitude: 1,500m

Located 80km north of Beirut, the spectacular falls of Qannoubine are definitely worth a visit. Formed by the melting snow covering Mount Makmel from December onwards, the Qannoubine falls surge into the valley - a UNESCO World Heritage Site. There are a number of exciting hiking opportunities for those looking to explore the area in greater depth.

If you’re spending the afternoon in Bcharre, you can enjoy a traditional lunch at one of the numerous restaurants there, including **Mississippi** (71 309065) and **Masa** (06 672729). Furthermore, you can visit the **Qadisha Cave**, the **Gibran Museum** (06 671137), and the incredible 13th century **Mar Lichaa Monastery** perched on the cliff.

MARVELOUS MUSEUMS TO DISCOVER



Photo: Ministry of Tourism

Whether you're into art, archaeology or aquatic life, we've got it covered! With the support of the **Lebanese Ministry of Tourism**, we take you around eight of the most impressive museums in and around Beirut

mot.gov.lb, destinationlebanon.gov.lb

BEIRUT NATIONAL MUSEUM

Built in the 1930s, the Beirut National Museum is the only one of its kind to exhibit ancient artifacts discovered on Lebanese territory. Considered to be among the richest museums in the Middle East, its precious objects tell the story of people and civilizations that conquered Lebanon and lived there, from prehistory to the 19th century.

Although the museum suffered severe damage during the Lebanese Civil War, thorough renovation was undertaken in the 1990s to restore it to its former glory. Today, the museum offers visitors the chance to travel back in time as they explore its three floors packed with hundreds of antiquities, including sarcophagi, mosaics, jewelry, coins, ceramics and woodwork.

Entrance: 5,000 LBP (adults), 1,000 LBP (students and under 18s)

Hours: Tue-Sun (excluding public holidays) from 9 AM to 5 PM.

Museum St., 01 426703,
beirutnationalmuseum.com

SURSOCK MUSEUM

Widely regarded as one of the most important modern art museums in Lebanon, the Sursock Museum was the former villa of aristocrat Nicolas Sursock, who gifted the mansion as an art museum to the city of Beirut upon his death in 1952. The building itself is nothing short of a work of art, with its exquisite blend of Venetian and Ottoman architectural elements and extravagant external staircases. After a lengthy five-year expansion project, the Sursock reopened its doors to the public in 2015.

Displaying more than 800 works from Lebanese and international artists, the museum has hosted around 100 exhibitions over the course of its history. The permanent exhibition includes a collection of Islamic art works and Japanese engravings.

Entrance: Free (donations are welcome)

Hours: Daily from 10 AM to 6 PM except on Thursday 12 PM to 9 PM. Closed on Tuesday.

Greek Orthodox Archbishopric St., Achrafieh,
01 202001, sursock.museum

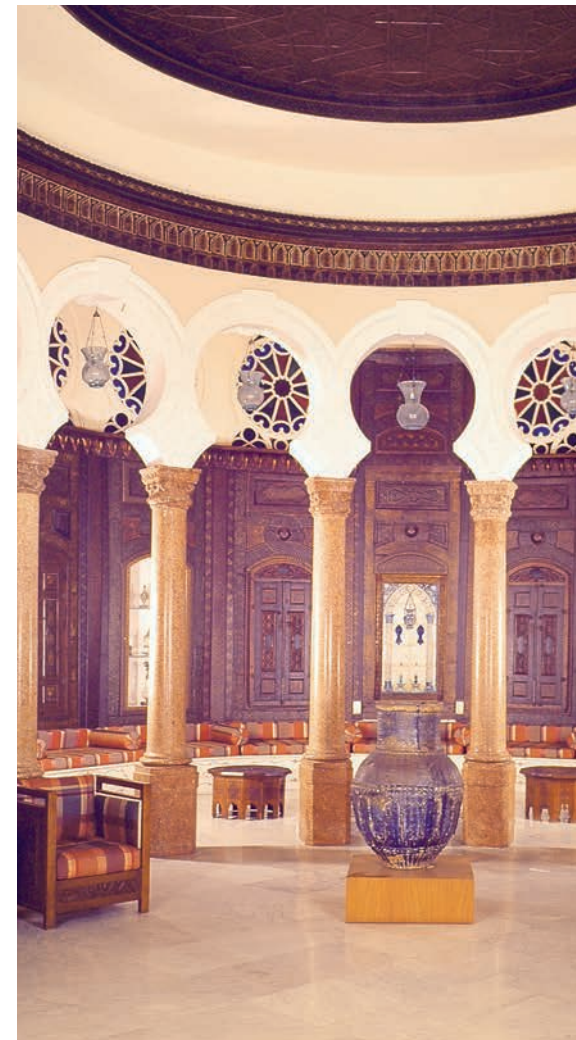


Photo: Ministry of Tourism



LEBANESE PREHISTORY MUSEUM

Inaugurated in 2000, the Lebanese Prehistory Museum showcases the result of extensive research conducted by the Jesuit order into prehistoric periods in Lebanon.

Occupying two floors, the museum houses an exceptional collection of animal and human bones, Neolithic pottery, stone tools and other ancient items recovered from over 400 archaeological sites.

Entrance: 5,000 LBP (adults), 3,000 LBP (students)

Hours: Tue-Fri from 8:30 AM to 3 PM (Saturday upon request).

Saint Joseph University St., Achrafieh, 01 421860/2, usj.edu.lb

AUB ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM

Founded in 1868, the museum is one of the oldest in the Middle East. It holds an important collection of objects such as flint, currencies, mosaics and prehistoric tools from Lebanon and neighboring countries, covering a period from the Early Stone Age to the Islamic era.

Entrance: Free

Hours: Mon-Fri from 9 AM to 5 PM (winter), and from 9 AM to 4 PM (summer). Closed during official and AUB holidays.

American University of Beirut, Bliss St., Hamra, 01 759665, aub.edu.lb



VILLA AUDI MOSAIC MUSEUM

Located on a leafy street in Sursock, the beautiful Villa Audi houses a unique collection of mosaics from all four corners of the world. In addition to the extraordinary mosaics, visitors can see a number of sculptures as they explore both floors of the villa.

Although there are no descriptions to accompany the mosaics, the museum's director can be contacted for a guided tour.

Entrance: Free

Hours: Mon-Fri from 9:30 AM to 5 PM.

Saint Nicolas St., off Blvd. Charles Malek, Achrafieh, 01 219943/01 331600, audifoundation.org.lb

MIM: THE MINERAL MUSEUM

Showcasing more than 1,400 minerals and gems from over 60 countries, Mim is home to Salim Eddé's private collection.

Considered one of the world's paramount private collections for the variety and quality of its minerals, visitors are taken on an interactive journey to learn more about the science behind mineralogy.

Entrance: 6,000 LBP (adults), 3,000 LBP (university students). Free for under 12s.

Hours: Tue-Sun from 10 AM to 1 PM and from 2 PM to 6 PM.

USJ, Damascus St., 01 421672, mim.museum



WONDERS OF THE SEA

Unlocking the mysteries of the aquatic world, this museum is set in a traditional high-ceilinged house with a beautiful garden. Inside, a saltwater aquarium features sea creatures native to the Mediterranean as well as octopuses, starfish and seahorses.

Visitors can observe a huge collection of mummified sharks, dolphins, sea turtles, shells and coral varieties as well as forest animals, including wolves, foxes, and birds.

Entrance: 8,000 LBP (adults), 5,000 LBP (children)

Hours: Mon-Fri from 8:30 AM to 1 PM and Sat-Sun from 3 PM to 7 PM.

Jdeideh, 01 891548, wondersofthesea.net

BANQUE DU LIBAN (BDL) MUSEUM

Displaying an impressive collection of local and foreign currencies as well as rare and valuable ancient banknotes and coins, the museum captures a rich history covering the Persian, Hellenistic, Roman, Byzantine, Arab, Islamic and Crusaders periods. In addition, it boasts a complete collection of 280 original Lebanese banknotes dating back to 1919.

Entrance: Free

Hours: Tue-Thu from 8:30 AM to 1 PM, Fri-Sat from 8:30 AM to noon (excluding public holidays).

Banque Du Liban, Bloc A, Ground Floor, Hamra 01 750000 ext. 6020, bdl.gov.lb



Photo: Ministry of Tourism



A TALE OF TABBOULEH

An essential part of the Lebanese table, *tabbouleh* has gained international fame in recent years. Fresh and tangy, it is a true reflection of Lebanon in a dish, as **Zeinab Jeambey** from the Food Heritage Foundation explains



Derived from the word *tabbil*, meaning “to season,” the recipe for *tabbouleh* revolves around its main and most important ingredient, parsley. What is key is how fine the parsley is chopped and how balanced the seasoning and ingredients are.

The most common recipe for *tabbouleh* includes parsley, tomatoes, mint, onions and fine bulgur wheat mixed and tossed with a seasoning made from lemon juice, olive oil, salt and pepper. Pomegranate juice and sour grape juice are also often used to give an acidic flavor to the tangy salad.

However, *tabbouleh* differs considerably from one region to another, from a simple change in seasoning to a totally different set of ingredients.

SAFSOUF

Hermel - Hermel District

Fine bulgur wheat and spices are stir-fried with olive oil and ghee until the bulgur wheat soaks all the fat. The mixture is then set aside while dried walnuts are stir-fried with a generous amount of ghee. The parsley and other vegetables (less than the usual quantity) are then mixed with the bulgur wheat. Both lemon oil and pomegranate molasses are used in the seasoning. The salad is eaten with either tender, raw vine leaves or fresh cabbage leaves.

To try *safsouf*, contact Khadijeh Chahine (71 579547).



ERYNGO TABBOULEH

Al Barouk - Shouf District

Eryngo or *qorsaaneh* is a wild edible plant, which grows abundantly in our mountains in early spring. *Qorsaaneh* is a substitute for the parsley in this recipe, making it a wonderful seasonal and healthy option.

To try *qorsaaneh tabbouleh*, contact Adel Hakim at Al Aqed Guesthouse and Restaurant in March and April (71 172270).

WINTER TABBOULEH

Mtein - Metn District

This is yet another seasonal variation, which includes little or no parsley. It is made of bulgur wheat soaked in lukewarm water, cooked chickpeas, *awarma* (preserved meat in sheep fat) and seasoned with lemon, olive oil, salt and pepper. This *tabbouleh* is often enjoyed with boiled cabbage leaves.

To try winter *tabbouleh*, contact Ghada Al Qontar at Mtein Guesthouse (03 659198).



Photos: The Recipe Hunters



TABBOULEH KEZZEBEH (MTASHASH)
 Andqet - Akkar District

This is a fusion between *tabbouleh* and the Armenian dish *itch*. Coarse bulgur wheat is used in the preparation of this salad, the quantity of which is greater than the amount of vegetables. Tomato paste is also incorporated into the mix, along with the seasoning of traditional *tabbouleh*.

To try *tabbouleh kezzebah*, contact Rose Bitar (70 010390).

TABBOULEH WITH GREEN FAVA BEANS
 Jdaidet Marjayoun - Marjayoun District

This delicious *tabbouleh* is most commonly made in spring when green fava beans are in season. The beans replace the tomatoes that have not yet been planted and harvested.

To try this dish, contact Majed Makhoul in April (03 903060/ 07 830913).

TABBOULEH WITH SPLIT LENTILS
 Mristi - Shouf District

A high-protein version of the traditional *tabbouleh*, this recipe incorporates split red lentils that have been soaked overnight. Less bulgur wheat is used here than in other recipes.

To try this variation, contact Bassima Zeidan (71 383649/05 330181).

71 731437, food-heritage.org

THE SOUND OF OUD

Music has always played an integral role in Lebanese cultural heritage and the oud is one of the nation's most beloved instruments. From the makers to the masters, LT explores its magical sound

THE OUD MAKER

Akin to the Western lute, the oud, meaning "thin wood," is considered by many to be the king of musical instruments in the Arab world. Over the centuries, this beautiful, half pear-shaped wooden instrument has provided countless musicians with a wonderful means of lyrical expression. Although the modern day oud has 11 or 13 strings, the instrument had just four or five at the very start of Arab civilization.

Fadi Matta is a man who has dedicated the last 30 years to making ouds. With more than 300 to his credit, Matta explains that the crafting of this instrument is time consuming and highly delicate. "Every instrument has its own shape and character, which, combined, produce a distinct range of sounds. The craftsmanship of a single oud, depending on the tools and materials used, could take anything between three



to four weeks. Also, given the number of individual parts that go into the process, a single overlooked mistake would render the instrument permanently flawed."

A talented oud player himself, Matta mainly uses rosewood from India, Africa and Brazil to make his beautiful instruments. He notes, however, that other woods may be used, such as red cedar, walnut, maple and spruce. "No one kind [of wood] takes precedence, as each has a different density, texture and color. The resulting tones range between loud and explosive to warm and tender."

What greatly affects the identity and sound of the instrument, according to Matta, is the source of the wood. "The walnut wood used to manufacture Lebanese ouds between 1800 and 1900 no longer exists or is unavailable in quantities meant for mass production. Since then, we use the same

type of walnut but of the American or African variety. It is a bit rougher, lighter and not as aesthetically pleasing. The sound produced is strong and sharp."

In his workshop, Matta meticulously crafts his fixed and floating-bridged ouds. Watching him painstakingly place the strings over the perfectly cut rosette, he speaks in a warm tone about his journey. "Before I decided to go into manufacturing this instrument, I first dedicated myself to learning how to play it. Over the years, I felt the responsibility of preserving an instrument which dates back thousands of years and will continue to exist for another thousand as it is central to the music emerging out of this region."

Matta notes that although the profession is no longer as profitable as it used to be, he remains committed to his work. "What keeps me going is the hope that someday I will make my own mark and, in turn, help usher a tradition reflective of our rich history, art and culture into the future."

03 259633, fadimatta.com





FAMOUS LEBANESE OUD PLAYERS

Lebanon has produced many famous oud players who have successfully shared the magical sound of the instrument with international audiences.

Marcel Khalife

Synonymous with the oud, Khalife has been singing, composing and playing music since the 1970s. Known internationally, he has taught oud to many students over the years. Khalife strives to break from convention that traditionally defines what and how some instruments should be played, earning him great respect from his loyal audience.

Charbel Rouhana

Born in 1965, Charbel Rouhana has written music for film and theater and has played his oud music across Europe and the Middle East. He is known for developing a new method for playing the oud, which has been adopted by the music faculty at USEK in Lebanon.

Andre Msane

Andre Msane began to play the oud at the age of 14. After studying the oud professionally, he formed a group and toured Lebanon and France for several years. Msane's music encompasses contemporary and traditional styles.

Bassem Rizk

Lebanese composer and musician Bassem Rizk is a master of his generation. He has contributed significantly to the development of different musical methods and has composed original music for filmmakers and theatrical directors around the world.



“ EVERY INSTRUMENT HAS ITS OWN SHAPE AND CHARACTER ”

Mohammed El-Bakkar

A celebrated tenor, oud player and conductor, the late El-Bakkar lived in the United States for most of his life where he produced Arabic music and performed with his Oriental ensemble. Among his most famous songs are “Banat Iskandaria” and “Port Said,” still popular to this day. He died in 1959 at the age of 46 while performing at an annual Lebanese American festival in the United States.

Rabih Abou-Khalil

A well-known oud player and composer, Abou-Khalil's trademark sound fuses different styles of music together, such as traditional Arab music with jazz or European classical music. His work is admired globally, particularly among the jazz guitar community who study and play his music.

WHERE TO LISTEN TO OUD MUSIC

Today, the oud remains well loved throughout Lebanon. While traditional tunes evoke feelings of nostalgia, the newer generations are able to relate to oud music thanks to artists that have revived classical sounds and integrated them into modern melodies.

60's Beirut is a cozy pub in Mar Mikhael that'll take you back to the good old days. The pub hosts an oud night every Thursday.
Alexander Fleming Street, Mar Mikhael, 01 442752/71 536262

Al Mayass is a popular restaurant serving Armenian and Lebanese food. Live oud can be enjoyed every night.
Trabaud Street, Achrafieh, 01 215046/03 295060

Blue Note Café is one of Beirut's most famous live music venues. It often hosts oud performances.
Makhoul Street, Hamra, 01 743857

Café Em Nazih is a chilled-out spot in Gemmayze, popular with locals and tourists alike. Oud nights are held on Fridays and Saturdays.
Saifi Urban Gardens, Pasteur Street, Gemmayze, 76 711466

El Denye Hek is a quintessential Lebanese restaurant, with a charming interior guaranteed to transport you back in time. The restaurant has an oud night every Monday and Thursday.
Armenia Street, Mar Mikhael, 01 567191/71 476666

Le Jardin Du Royal at Le Royal Hotels and Resorts offers guests the chance to enjoy Lebanese cuisine in a relaxing atmosphere. Oud music can be heard on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays.
Leisure Hills Complex, Dbayeh 04 555000

Mezyan is a pub with a homey feel, where you can enjoy Mediterranean cuisine and good music. A band playing Oriental music can be enjoyed every Thursday.
Rasamny Center, Main Street, Hamra, 01 740608/71 293015



QANAT BAKISH, MOUNT LEBANON

“Two minutes after I captured this incredible view with my drone, massive clouds rolled in and covered the mountains. Qanat Bakish is such a calm place, where one feels totally at peace.”

By Joe Sokhn, @joe.sokhn



10 HIKING IDEAS

You don't need to be a professional hiker to enjoy Lebanon's numerous trails. **Jad About Arrage**, a rural tourism specialist, rounds up a selection of hikes to challenge you this season



THE IRON OAK FOREST, AKKAR DISTRICT

Level: Easy
Length: 5km
Lowest point: 1,345m
Highest point: 1,528m

This trail takes you to one of the most beautiful forests in Lebanon, characterized by iron oak trees which rise to a height of 30m. A warm palette of colors permeates the forest, providing nature photography

enthusiasts with a mesmerizing vista from which to draw inspiration. End your hike at sunset to experience the magnificent glow of golden leaves as they rustle gently in the breeze.

Those wishing to extend their hike in the region can complete Section 2 on the Lebanon Mountain Trail between Tashea and Qemmamine, taking in the diversity of Akkar's juniper, cedar, oak and fir forests, and the astonishing views of Mount



Makmel and Jabal Aarouba. Visit lebanontrail.org for more information.

WHERE TO SLEEP (QEMMAMINE)

Abou Draa Guesthouse (03 817312)
Ali Issa Guesthouse (70 422453)
Abou Moustapha Guesthouse (03 148668)

WHERE TO SLEEP (TASHEA)

Abou Marwan Guesthouse (06 895661)
Deir Mar Jerjes (03 810355)

LOCAL GUIDES (QEMMAMINE)

Hussein Abu Draa (03 817312)
Mohamed Taleb (70 937284)

LOCAL GUIDES (FNAIDEQ)

Mohamad El Kik (03 526110)
Ahmed El Kik (70 413681)

KFOUR SPRINGS TRAIL, KESERWAN DISTRICT

Level: Easy
Length: 6km
Lowest point: 505m
Highest point: 785m

The trail is named after the five water sources of the village: Breich's source, Mikhael's source, El Kroum's source, Al Sefsafi's source and Henbles source. At the start of the trail, hikers can enjoy a scenic view of Jounieh Bay and Beirut's



northern coastline before commencing their walk along the stream and their hike through the dense forest typified by pine, oak, cypress, olive and fruit trees. A peaceful picnic area with tables and benches is located next to the main water source, providing a perfect spot to take a break and absorb the natural beauty of the surrounding area.

LOCAL GUIDES

Contact the municipality (09 788707)



HORSH EHDEN NATURE RESERVE, ZGHARTA DISTRICT

Level: All levels
Length: 2km to 12km
Lowest point: 1,200m
Highest point: 2,000m

Horsh Ehden is Lebanon's most diverse nature reserve, with its rich mix of conifers, deciduous and evergreen broadleaf trees, and its varied terrain. It serves as a prime location for ecotourism activities and a popular destination for those interested in bird watching.

WHERE TO SLEEP

La Reserve Ehden (06 561092)
 Ehden Country Club (06 560651/2/3)
 Abchi Hotel (06 561101/2)
 La Mairie Hotel (06 560108)

LOCAL GUIDES

Contact the reserve (70 601601)

HADATH EL JEBBEH FOREST, BCHARRE DISTRICT

Level: Medium
Length: 9km
Lowest point: 1,500m
Highest point: 1,950m

The trail begins at the main entrance of the Hadath el Jebbeh cedars forest, with a pleasant walk on footpaths and dirt roads between the old cedar trees. On the way you'll pass by the Ain Jeara water source

and cross the area of Sahlet el Atcha. From there, turn back to the starting point to enjoy a scenic view of Mount Makmel and Bcharre.

WHERE TO SLEEP

Auberge Hadath el Jebbeh (03 220756)

LOCAL GUIDES

Contact the municipality (71 680222)

**BENTAEL NATURE RESERVE,
MOUNT LEBANON**

Level: Easy

Length: 4km

Lowest point: 335m

Highest point: 560m

The reserve provides a network of short distance trails connected through a dense Mediterranean forest of pine and oak trees. High fauna and flora biodiversity characterize Bentael Nature Reserve, making it a popular destination for nature lovers. Along the trails you can enjoy the views of several vertical cliffs of bare rock with numerous small, natural caves including the St. John's rock-cut hermitage and chapel, which date back to the 12th century.

LOCAL GUIDES

Contact the reserve (09 738330)



HIKERS' SELECTION

LT asked some hiking enthusiasts and experts to share their favorite hiking destinations



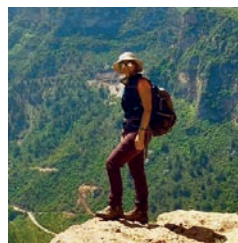
MARK AOUN *President of ecotourism specialist Vamos Todos*

Ain Zebde is one of the most stunning villages in Lebanon, where one can witness the huge variety of flora and fauna that our country, and specifically the Bekaa Valley, can offer. Standing on the foothills of Al Barouk Mountains,

Ain Zebde is one of the highest villages of West Bekaa, surrounded by Kherbet Kanafar to the north and Saghbine to the south.

The village's name refers to the abundance of water sources surrounding it which feed the Litani River. You will hear the sound of running water throughout the hike.

Ain Zebde is abundant in fruits and vegetables, namely walnuts, apples, peaches, onions and small red potatoes.



GHADA EL KHELLY *Founder of Adrenaline Trekking, specialist in international trekking and hiking trips*

After hiking for more than 20 years all over Lebanon's mountains, hills and valleys, I would say that each hike and trail has its own beauty, charm, history, spirituality and particularity. However,

if you want to combine all the above, head to the Kadisha Valley in North Lebanon. The area is so versatile, with numerous starting points of varying levels of difficulty, depending if you want to go uphill or downhill, and countless places of interest to see along the way including the famous Qannoubine Monastery and the Our Lady of Hawka Monastery. Hiking the valley is not just about sports and trekking, it's also about learning the history of Lebanon.



AEDIS KALPAKLIAN

Mountain guide and managing director of tour operator Sports 4 Life

After running the Lebanon Mountain Trail twice and hiking almost everywhere in Lebanon I would say the

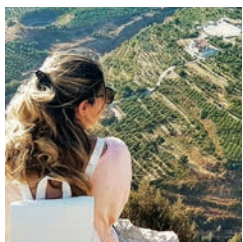
mountains of Qamoua are the best to hike in fall and winter. Surfing this untouched area between cedars, junipers and fir trees, with their mix of dark green, yellow, orange and red colors, is indescribable. I am truly amazed by the beauty I see in front of my eyes every time I go there.



PIERRE SAKR *Guide, member of Club Des Vieux Sentiers hiking group and amateur outdoor photographer*

In the fall, nature wears new colors. This is particularly evident in the Al Delb Valley, located at the heart of the

Sannine Mountain. It's a lovely area to hike around the end of November. Start your nine kilometer hike at Nabaa Sannine, located 15 minutes by car from Al Mrouj square and 30 minutes from Baabdat. Pass by Al Chakhroub, where the face of the famous author Mekhayel Naaymeh is carved into the cliff. As you commence your descent to the Al Delb Valley, you will witness the incredible view of fruit gardens. I'm a firm believer in the health benefits of hiking, not only for the body but for the spirit too.



DIALA SHUHAIBER

Hiking enthusiast and founder of the Instagram travel account @framewithaview

Hike up to the incredibly surprising cave in Akoura, where St. John

the Baptist reputedly spent some time in hiding. The first 10 minutes of the hike are quite steep and challenging but they're also exciting for adrenaline junkies like myself. Once you reach the top of the cliff, cross over to the cave and enjoy some of the most stunning and breathtaking views that Lebanon has to offer. It's definitely a hike you will never forget. Just a tip - I recommend you get a guide, which you can do by contacting @explorersalive on Instagram.



EYE ON DESIGN

There's no denying that Lebanon's design community is thriving. From a wealth of incredible talent commanding attention at home and abroad, *LT* profiles four designers to keep on your watch list



GEORGES MOHASSEB

Architect

Lebanese architect and designer Georges Mohasseb, founder of Wood&, talks about the beauty of working with wood to fashion one-of-a-kind furniture pieces that reflect the spirit of this ever-changing age.

Describing the Lebanese as “entrepreneurial, daring and dynamic, with a keen eye for taste and refinement,” it comes as no surprise that Mohasseb incorporates such characteristics into his creations. “I work with wood as it is a natural element which, after being processed, takes on a life of its own. The smell, rich texture and natural colors amplify the way every piece looks and feels,” he says.

Mohasseb's work has garnered plenty of international recognition and awards over the past two decades, during which he has also spent time teaching design at various European and American academic institutions. “Teaching is also a learning process about sharing thoughts and transmitting a savoir faire. One learns to listen to the students and strengthen one's own approach toward design through research, reading, experimenting and prototyping,” he explains.



“ I WORK WITH WOOD AS IT IS A NATURAL ELEMENT WHICH, AFTER BEING PROCESSED, TAKES ON A LIFE OF ITS OWN ”

Mohasseb's pieces are unique in design, a testament to his disdain for mass production and uniformity. Referring to the “absence of the presence,” his creations shift the focus away from the material and onto the shape and form of the objects themselves.

He reveals that his real inspiration is no longer limited by geography, rather expanded by feelings, emotions, attention to detail, the experiences of people and travel, which are as infinite as the creativity displayed in his work.

woodand.com



“ I LOVE LEBANESE HERITAGE AND BUILT ON THAT TO CREATE MY LATEST COLLECTION ”

JOANNA DAHDAAH

Jewelry designer

Playfully creative, Joanna Dahdah is a young jewelry designer who, from the get-go, has received global recognition for her innovations and has been on a roll ever since.

Choosing to work with gold for its versatility, Dahdah's fascination for this conductive metal and love for one of the world's most renowned painters, Gustav Klimt, eventually saw the young designer crafting her first collection aptly titled "Muse." Her creations caught the eye of an editor at Italian Vogue and soon afterward, she was awarded "Best Newcomer of 2010" at London Jewelry Week.

Explaining what makes her intricate work unique, Dahdah cites its detail. "My first collection was very sculptural, with large hollow shapes, bold colors and mat gold. Yet aside from the design, what makes it distinct is my out-of-the-box thinking. The element of surprise is always

present in my work, making it unlike anything else available on the market."

As a designer who is relatively new to the scene, Dahdah believes that achieving success locally and internationally requires a great deal of patience. "The jewelry markets in both Lebanon and in Europe are fascinating. However, as any young brand name knows, the globally unstable economic situation could pose a serious threat, which is why we always have to find new ways to adapt and never give up."

For that very reason, setting oneself apart from the competition is paramount. Evident in her work, she has drawn on her own experience by exploring Lebanese history and culture. "I love Lebanese heritage and built on that to create my latest collection. Titled 'Tarbouche,' it comprised 11 charms, an idea that has proven to be quite effective, not to mention identifiably-relatable, especially throughout the region."
joannadahdah.com



MARTHA FADEL

Fashion designer

Martha Fadel’s journey as a fashion designer began in 2001 after her first trip to New York, a city that has inspired much of her work. “New York has always been my muse: the architecture the skyline, the edges, the asymmetry.” After spending more than a decade perfecting her fashion-design skills and working relentlessly to create her own unique style, Fadel launched her first clothing line in 2013, offering everything from high-end, ready-to-wear garments to haute couture and bridal wear.

Talking about her connection to her work, Fadel says, “Fashion is all about creating and evolving year after year. You can put your own fingerprint on any outfit. There are no boundaries or rules.”

Fadel’s pieces are a harmonious amalgamation of sharp and daring designs, asymmetric cuts, contrasting fabrics and block colors. “Black is a dominant color in my collections in addition to white and nude. It exudes confidence yet maintains style. I also incorporate leather into many of my designs.”

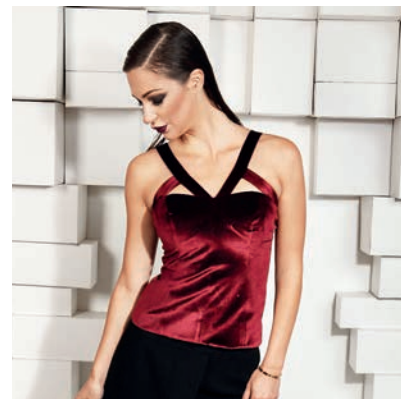
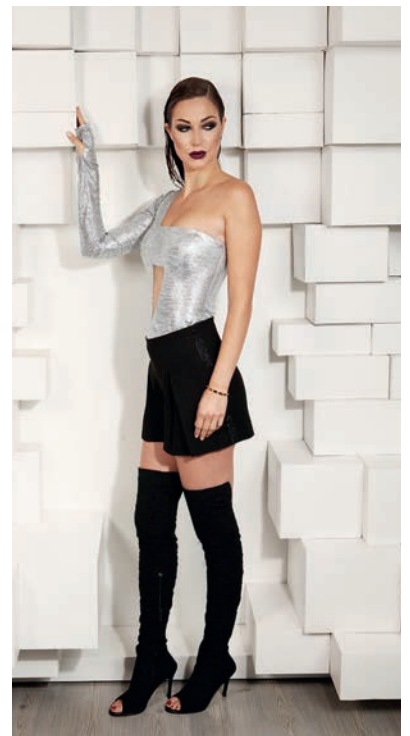
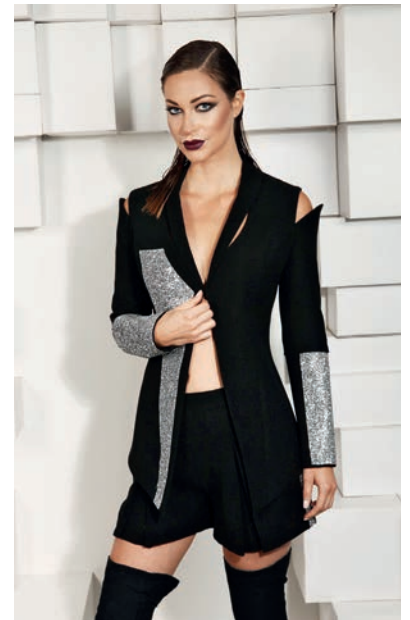
Despite having dressed celebrities in the United States such as the late Joan Rivers, and the likes of Lebanese singing sensation Myriam Fares, Fadel remains true to her Lebanese roots. “I believe in my city. It is a small place with big potential.” She adds that all of the biggest Lebanese designers who have succeeded on an international level started from Beirut. “With minimal machinery, a few workers and a humble atelier, they managed to create these incredible pieces. It is because they had a vision and a creative mind that they reached Hollywood and red carpets events. I couldn’t be prouder of their achievements.”

Fadel showcases her collection twice a year in New York and Dubai.

marthafadel.com

lebanontraveler.com

“ I BELIEVE IN MY CITY. IT IS A SMALL PLACE WITH BIG POTENTIAL ”





MAYA HUSSEINI
Stained-glass designer

Maya Husseini has spent almost three decades creating intricate art out of stained glass.

Explaining the difficulty of working with such a fragile material, Husseini says, "To work with glass is a real challenge. The material urges us to conduct extensive research, especially when it comes to finding what other materials it reacts with best. As such, there is always an element of surprise and unpredictability related to thermoforming. In the furnace, where the glass takes the shape of the mold, the painting can reveal some unexpected results compared to those results achieved when combined with other materials."

The surprises that continued to come Husseini's way only strengthened her resolve and passion for a craft that was, to a degree, unorthodox. During the early 1990s, she fully immersed herself in glass making, more specifically, stained glass. "I began participating in professional exhibitions where I met with architects and private individuals. What I found interesting was that every exhibition I took part in and each project I worked on taught me that there was no one way of doing things since, every day, you create something entirely new."



“GLASS IS A RICH MATERIAL AND SHOULD NOT BE FORGOTTEN. IT WAS IN TYRE DURING THE PHOENICIAN ERA THAT THE FIRST GLASS-BLOWERS WERE BORN”

Husseini recalls that although being one of the first women in Lebanon to work with glass meant she could pursue the profession with greater freedom, customers did not always believe in her ability. This changed with time as Husseini's name became better known, as did her incredible work. "Stained glass using glassblowing on the windows of the Nicolas Sursock Museum has been one of my most memorable projects. Another was the work I undertook for the Saint Louis of the Capuccins Cathedral in Downtown Beirut. The stained glass windows, which I designed, took almost two years to complete."

It is clear that Husseini's passion is mirrored by a deep sense of pride for the origins of her craft. "Glass is a rich material and should not be forgotten. It was in Tyre during the Phoenician era that the first glass-blowers were born and I plan to use my workshop to teach young furniture designers and architects how to include glass in their work to uphold this important tradition in contemporary creation."

ceverre@dm.net.lb

Glitz and Glamor at THE CASINO DU LIBAN

A landmark recognized the world over, LT explores the incredible story of the Casino du Liban

Perched on a rocky hill in Maameltein, a 20km drive north of Beirut, stands the larger-than-life Casino du Liban. With an enviable view of the coastline, it occupies a massive 35,000 square-meter plot of land and remains the only gaming venue in the entire MENA region.

The Casino opened its doors on December 17, 1959, and, in the blink of an eye, blended the magic and authenticity of the East with the culture of the West. Indeed, the allure of its location coupled with a lavishly decorated interior attracted the world's jetsetters, who would come from far and wide to revel in its opulence.

The renowned Salle des Ambassadeurs performance hall saw producers of the biggest European and American shows queuing to stage a performance. Management even convinced the organizers of the coveted Miss Europe to host the event there, which they gladly did between 1960 and 1965, a world first. The salle was renovated in 1964, incorporating the latest technologies and increasing its seating capacity to 850 spectators with additional changing rooms to accommodate 200 performers. Some six years later, Miss Lebanon 1971 was held there and the winner, Georgina Rizk, was later crowned Miss Universe.

Sadly, the outbreak of the Lebanese Civil War in 1975 saw the Casino shutting its doors for over a decade, and it was not until 1989 that the decision was taken to fix the damage. The venue underwent a massive 50 million USD refurbishment, which was finally completed at the end of 1996.

Throughout its history, the Casino du Liban has been a playground for the world's rich and famous. Today, the venue continues to have an important role, hosting dance troupes, music legends and countless cultural events all year round.

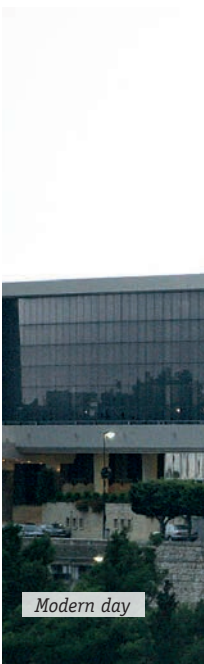
casinoduliban.com



Charles Aznavour



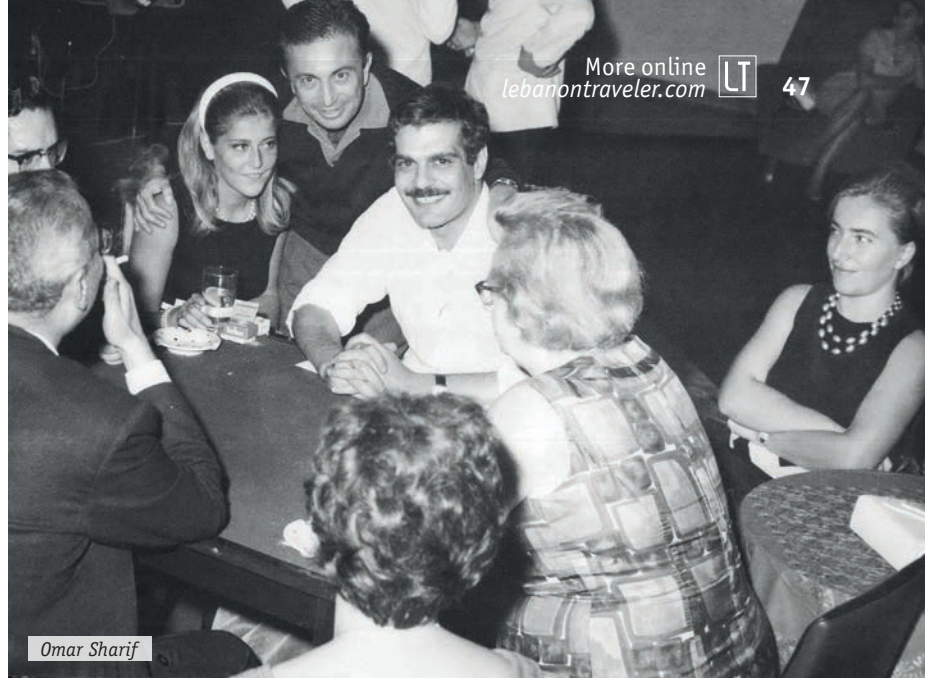
A glamorous show



Modern day



Jacques Brel



Omar Sharif



In the 60s



Celebrities



UPCOMING EVENTS AT THE CASINO DU LIBAN

17-18 NOVEMBER STOMP

9-10 DECEMBER ADEL KARAM

26-30 DECEMBER BUBBLE SHOW



THE ART OF LIFE IN CHADRA

Artist **Layal Khawly** may now live in Beirut and exhibit abroad, but she has never forgotten her childhood in her hometown of Chadra in Akkar

“Love, peace, nature, beauty and simplicity; this is what I remember about the first few years of my life in Akkar,” Layal Khawly recalls. “They still have all their traditions, such as making *tannour* bread and farming organically.”

Khawly’s connection to Akkar and Lebanon is evident in her contemporary art, with much of her work being influenced by memories or events connected to her homeland.

“Lebanese villages as well as the city both influence my art,” Khawly explains. “I’m lucky to have both backgrounds since I’m from a village where nature, beauty and simplicity coexist and where each stone tells a story. However, the city inspires me with its modernity, colors and the dynamic life within it.”



In 2014, she created a nostalgic series called “The Lebanese Abandoned Villages,” which paid homage to Chadra and other towns around the area. Khawly still visits Chadra when she can, taking the time to pass by her favorite spots and breathe in the nature around her.

“I love going near the river that runs through Chadra. There’s a tree nursery there which is part of an environmental project and it’s a wonderful place to be,” she says. “It’s also possibly one of the last Christian villages in the North so it’s unique. It’s a place where you can meditate and reconnect with art and nature.”

Khawly started painting as a young girl and her thirst for the world of art allowed her to visualize new perspectives when there were none. Growing up with this passion fueled Khawly’s ambition to make her mark as an artist and represent her country abroad.

“ I THINK PEOPLE CAN UNDERSTAND MORE ABOUT MY HOMELAND THROUGH MY ART ”

Khawly’s work is characteristically colorful, although her favorite color is grey. “It’s the color of dust that is caused by time, time that reveals everything,” she explains. “It’s also the color of compromise - being neither black nor white; it is the transition between two non-colors.”

Khawly graduated with a BA in Interior Architecture from Notre Dame

University and an MA in Visual Arts from the Académie Libanaise des Beaux-Arts (ALBA) in Beirut. When she’s not painting, she enjoys reading, listening to music and finding interesting architecture.

“I love walking the streets of Gemmayze and Mar Mikhael,” she says. “These neighborhoods have old buildings and architecture that we rarely see now. I feel they have souls and looking at them gives me a sense of serenity.”

In May 2016, she was selected by the Chinese Ministry of Culture to represent Lebanon at the National Museum of Art in Shanghai.

“I couldn’t be prouder to represent my country abroad,” she says. “I think people can understand more about my homeland through my art. They can see the sadness but also the beauty that is calling us back to Lebanon.”

layalkhawly.com @  

MAQAM EL NABI AYYOUB, NIHA

Religious anthropologist, researcher and founder of NEOS Tourism consultancy **Nour Farra-Haddad** takes us on a trip to one of Lebanon's most known pilgrimage sites, Maqam El Nabi Ayyoub in Niha



Niha is a beautiful village in Mount Lebanon's Shouf area, perched 1,020m above sea level. A Druze majority and Christian minority inhabit the village. The main landmarks of the village are the famous Maqam of Nabi Ayyoub and Niha Fortress, also known as Fakhreddine Fortress. In the old town, you can also visit the Church of Saint Joseph and the Ain al-Qat'ah fountain.

The Maqam of Nabi Ayyoub was renovated several times, and buildings, halls and rooms were added in order to accommodate the thousands of worshippers. In 1947, Sheikh Akl Muhammad Abou Chakra began the restoration of the premises and the work has continued ever since.

The main building hosts the tomb of the saint, Darih El Nabi Ayyoub (the prophet Job), under a large cupola topped with the colored Druze star. Believers from various religious communities across the country visit the shrine for its benedictions and graces. A large esplanade in front of the main building offers a fantastic panoramic view. In an annex, there are rooms available for pilgrims who wish to sleep in the maqam. To the rear of the shrine is a tree said to



HOW TO GET THERE

The town of Niha is located 65km southeast of Beirut, in the Shouf area. The Maqam of Nabi Ayyoub is located on the summit of a mountain, about 1,400m above sea level, and just a few kilometers from the town.

To reach Niha, take the highway southbound towards Damour and then follow the signs to Deir El Qamar, Moukhtara, Ammatour, and Bater. Niha sits around five kilometers from Bater.

The maqam is not recommended for those with walking difficulties due to the large number of stairs. It should also be noted that during winter, snow can sometimes block access to the shrine.

THINGS TO DO

In the old town of Niha, visit the **Church of Saint Joseph, Ain al-Qat'ah fountain**, and the **tomb of Wadih El Safi**, who originally hailed from Niha. Many other Druze sites can also be found in the town, including **Majles Bani Khamis, Majles Bani Ka'ik, Majles Bani Rakik** and **Majles El Abou Chebli**.

On the way to the shrine, admire the **Fortress of Niha**, a series of interlocking chambers carved into a cliff which was occupied by the Crusaders from 1165-1260. The rock face into which it was carved overlooks the valley of Bisri and Aray. Its position permits one to watch the pass between Saida and the Bekaa Valley; a site of strategic importance. The fortress holds a fair number of silos and storerooms for stocking cereals and ammunition. Thoroughly fortified, it faces a rock wall pierced by openings. Passage from one level to another is made possible via wooden beams buttressing the cliff.

Contact the shrine on 05 330164.

be miraculous, and, behind the sanctuary, a forest with century-old oak trees where visitors can enjoy a picnic. But the main attraction of this forest is a century-old arbutus tree, known to be miraculous and full of benedictions and graces. Local tradition says that this tree cured Job of skin disease. Amid green oak trees, the massive arbutus stands out thanks to its impressive reddish color. Devotees practice a variety of rituals around the tree, like hanging string and cloth in its branches. They also take fragments of the bark home for good fortune.

At the entrance of the shrine, in front of the parking lot, pilgrims light candles in a small cave. A big fountain situated there is another attraction, with the faithful who believe in its *baraka* visiting it to collect water.

DEDICATION OF THE SITE

The central figure of the Book of Job in the Holy Bible, Job is a prophet in the Abrahamic monotheist religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam. He is presented as a good and prosperous family man, who is beset with terrible disasters that take away

all he holds dear, including his offspring, his health and his property. He struggles to understand his situation and searches for answers.

Job is an important prophet for Muslims, mentioned in the Holy Qur'an. The narrative frame of Job's story in Islam is similar to that in the Bible, although in Islam the emphasis is on Job remaining faithful to God.

While this is the only shrine dedicated to him in Lebanon, there are other sanctuaries in his honor across the Middle East, including a miraculous cave in Urfa (Turkey) and a famous shrine in Salalah (Oman).



Mini Guides

**Discover Lebanon's charming villages and let LT be your companion!
Featuring Douma, Hasbaya, Maghdouche, Miziara, Mtein, Rachaya,
Taanayel and Tannourine**

CONTRIBUTORS

Josiane Atallah, Nagham Ghandour, Peter Ghanime, Liliane Jamo Maalouli, Krystel Riachi



DOUMA



Photos: Peter Ghanime

Set in the heart of the Batroun Mountains, Douma bears all the hallmarks of a traditional Lebanese village, with its quaint houses, noise-free streets and charming souk

✦ GETTING THERE

Douma is located around 80km from Beirut, a one-and-a-half to two-hour drive. Take the highway north towards Tripoli, exiting at Amchit. Continue towards Lehfed, then Mayfouk and follow the directions to Douma.

✦ WHAT TO DO

Old Souk

The old souk of Douma is picture perfect, so be sure to keep your camera handy. You can enjoy a stroll around the quaint stores and pick up some local specialties, including *halawa*, olive oil and homemade jams.

Close to the souk, there's an incredible piece of history in the form of a sarcophagus. Dating back to the fourth century, the sarcophagus is inscribed in Greek.

Hiking and Trekking

At over 1,000m above sea level, Douma offers breathtaking views and great hiking opportunities. Visitors can explore the nearby village of Bechaaleh, where there are olive trees dating back thousands of years (see page 20).

Another popular hiking trail is from Douma to the Baatara gorge in Balou Balaa (see Tannourine mini guide). At 250m deep, the Baatara sinkhole was carved by water

160 million years ago and boasts three natural bridges inside it. The highlight is the waterfall, which can be observed during winter and spring.

Book an organized hike with a specialist. Refer to page 71 for contact details.

Assia Pottery

Less than a 10-minute drive from Douma lies the village of Assia, where the tradition of pottery-making is still alive. Visit Sana Jabbour (03 630626), a local artisan, to learn more about the craft and discover the unique items her family has been making for generations.

☪ WHERE TO EAT

Esclapio

Established in 1969, Esclapio (06 520520) is a popular spot for indulging in Lebanese *mezze* and a glass of *arak*. Located in the heart of Douma, the restaurant offers an exceptional view as well as a lively entertainment program at the weekend.

Doumanian Coffee Shop

You won't be able to miss this charming coffee shop nestled in Douma's old souk. Adorned with ornaments and novelties, pop in for a refreshing drink or a bite to eat. The Doumanian Coffee Shop (71 186622) serves a variety of Lebanese specialties such as *foul* and *balila*, *beid balade w awarma bel fekhara*, *kaake* and *saj*.

Istirahit el Moukhtara

Run by the delightful Jamal Chalhoub, Istirahit el Moukhtara (71 224446) is a simple bakery just off the main street of Douma. Indulge in tasty *awarma*, *kishk* and

saj, which Jamal will prepare and serve with a smile.

🏠 WHERE TO SLEEP

Hotel Douma

Overlooking the village, Hotel Douma offers 40 comfortable rooms and suites. There are also a number of on-site facilities, including a children's play area and a tennis court. The hotel can also arrange local guides for those interested in exploring the countryside. 06 520202, hoteldouma.com

My Stone Cellar

Just minutes away from the souk lies My Stone Cellar at ISHAC Residence, a stone-cellar guesthouse set in a 1903 heritage house. Offering four exceptional vaulted-cellar rooms, it's a wonderful choice for those seeking something a little different. 71 283485, mystonecellar.com

Beit Douma

Part of the Souk el Tayeb family, Beit Douma is an old Lebanese house dating back to the 19th century. With incredible views over the mountain, the property offers six charming guest rooms. 06 520702, soukeltayeb.com



HASBAYA



Photos: Nidal Majdalani

Hasbaya is a breathtaking town in the Nabatieh Governorate of Lebanon. Situated at the foot of Mount Hermon, it promises visitors a glimpse of by-gone years, with its rich tapestry of arts, culture and heritage

✦ GETTING THERE

Hasbaya is approximately a two-hour drive from Beirut. Head south on the coastal highway towards Tyre and take the Nabatieh highway (signposted) until you reach Hasbaya.

✦ WHAT TO DO

Serail of Hasbaya – Chehabi Castle (Chehabi Citadel)

The centerpiece of culture and antiquity in the town is the long-standing Serail of Hasbaya, also known as the Citadel. Dating back to the Crusader period, the citadel was seized by the prominent Chehabi dynasty in 1170, where their descendants still live today.

The exquisite building consists of three floors above ground and three subterranean levels. Visible on either side of the arched entrance are stone lions, emblematic of the Chehabi family.

While entering the citadel is not permitted, it is still a spectacle worth taking in from the outside.

Roman Temple of Hebbariyeh

A lesser-known site in the region is the

Roman Temple of Hebbariyeh, located at the foot of Mount Hermon. Incredibly, parts of the temple's walls are still intact, as are the underground crypts which date back to the first century A.D.

Sabek Soap Factory

Run by the hospitable Sabek family in their residence, the soap factory in Hasbaya is definitely worth seeing. Visitors will have the opportunity to witness traditional soap-making carried out using conventional methods. Call Melhem Sabek (07 550217) to arrange a visit.

✦ WHERE TO EAT

Très Jolie Pâtisserie

If you're looking to satisfy a sweet tooth, Très Jolie Pâtisserie (07 551166) is a must. Its exceptional take on the traditional *knefe*, known as the Hisbayan *knefe*, is most certainly something you should try before leaving.

Fawar Al Hasbani

Nestled in lush greenery with the mesmerizing sound of the Hasbani River, enjoy a Lebanese lunch at Fawar al Hasbani (03 297586). Serving traditional fare since 1966, the restaurant has an extensive menu, which includes the fresh Hasbani fish and the local arak. Be sure to call in advance to check it's open.

Al Bohsasa

Located on the banks of the Hasbani River, Al Bohsasa (07 553000) serves authentic Lebanese cuisine in an awe-inspiring location. Enjoy picturesque views of the water as you feast on delicious *mezze*,

served with true southern hospitality.

🏠 WHERE TO SLEEP

Al Kalaa Resort

Ideal for those seeking relaxation, the Al Kalaa Resort offers guests beautiful chalets in the heart of nature. Bordering the Hasbani River, the resort is a great retreat for solo travelers or families.

03 460303

Hasbaya Village Club

The Hasbaya Village Club provides luxury accommodation with fully-furnished chalets offering scenic views of the surrounding area.

03 780580



MAGHDOUCHE

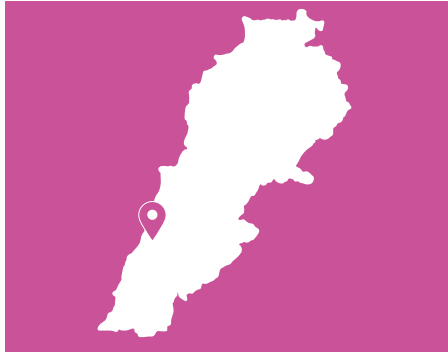


Photo: Nagham Ghandour

Located in South Lebanon, Maghdouche is a town with a beautiful story to tell. Recognized as an important destination for pilgrims, it is also a place where agricultural traditions remain strong and where visitors can enjoy a snapshot of true village life

✚ GETTING THERE

The town is located 50km south of Beirut and eight kilometers southeast of Saida, making it a great destination for those looking to do some sightseeing. Take the highway southbound from Beirut and exit just before you reach Saida. From there, continue on the coastal road until you see a road branch to the left, which is signposted and will direct you to Maghdouche.

✚ WHAT TO DO

Our Lady of Mantara

The town's most famous landmark is the tower of Our Lady of Awaiting, known as Our Lady of Mantara. Occupying a prominent position at the entrance of the village, it is believed to be the place where Mary waited for her son Jesus Christ when he was preaching in Sidon, Cana, Tyre and Sarafand. The cave within which Mary hid was abandoned, only to be rediscovered in 1721 when a shepherd was trying to save a goat that had fallen into a hole.

The people of Maghdouche constructed a

cathedral and a modern tower above the cave in 1963. Today, it is an internationally-recognized pilgrimage site.

Orange blossom harvest

Visit the town at the end of February or early March and you will notice the distinct fragrance of bitter orange trees. Maghdouche is well known for harvesting the orange flower and using it in local products, including orange-blossom water, marmalades and syrups. At the onset of spring, locals, farmers and families participate in picking the flower to be sold or distilled.

A picnic is organized every year by Lebanon Stories (03 321054) to the fields of the bitter orange trees, where guests can enjoy the experience while lending farmers a hand with their harvesting.

Hiking

For hikers and nature lovers, there is a beautiful hike in Abra, a village located less than a 10-minute drive from Maghdouche.

The easy-level hike takes in beautiful scenery. Hikers can expect to see very old trees, streams and a number of small caves. Contact Samir Sleiman (03 904300) to organize a hike.

🍴 WHERE TO EAT

Kroum El Chames

A well-known spot in the area, Kroum El Chames (70 655959) offers a vast selection of traditional Lebanese dishes.

Family Food

If you happen to reach Maghdouche in the morning, enjoy a hearty breakfast at Family

Food (07 200320). It's a great spot to grab a tasty *saj*.

Luma's Snack

Elie Khoury, the owner of Luma's Snack (71 298940), will prepare you a delicious sandwich using special recipes at the simple cafe.

🏠 WHERE TO SLEEP

Gladys

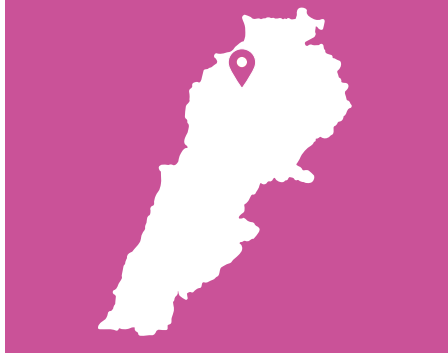
Nestled in the pretty village of Jinjleya, just minutes from Maghdouche, is Gladys. A member of the L'Hôte Libanais family, the guesthouse offers four delightful rooms and unrestricted sea views from the rooftop. Surrounded by olive groves and orchards, guests will feel totally at home in the company of the lovely family that run Gladys.

hotelibanais.com



Photo: Nidal Majdalani

MIZIARA



Perched on a hilltop 800m above the sea, the northern village of Miziara is home to some of the most unusual houses in the country, including one constructed out of an old airplane. The village also boasts incredibly well-maintained and organized streets, something of a rarity in Lebanon!

✚ GETTING THERE

Miziara is located at under a two-hour drive from Beirut. Take the coastal highway northbound towards Tripoli. After passing Hamat, exit the highway onto the Chekka-Amioun Road and follow the road to Miziara.

✚ WHAT TO DO

Our Lady of Miziara, Mother of Mercies

Built in 1979, Our Lady of Miziara is a Marian shrine that stands at the entrance of the village. The shrine consists of a statue of the Virgin Mary, and is guarded by two statues of angels made of limestone. Some sculptural representations of Christ's Baptism, the Wedding at Cana and the Last Supper can also be found in the shrine. A spacious park surrounds the site and is paved with walkways between olive and oak trees. Statuary nooks depict scenes from the Gospels such as the Nativity, the Flight into Egypt, the Baptism of Christ and Christ's Crucifixion.

Bnachii Lake

Located within a 20-minute drive of Miziara is the Bnachii Lake. Ideal for families thanks to the open space, food and drink options, and variety of activities, the lake offers visitors the opportunity to hire pedalos or take boat rides for just a few dollars. In addition, the path surrounding the lake is perfect for a long walk or a jog, while those after something a little more leisurely can hop on a horse-drawn carriage to take them around.

Built on the banks of the Bnachii Lake is the Wildlife Taxidermy Museum (06 550550). Containing more than 3,000 stuffed animals, the museum comprises five areas including sea life, reptiles, mammals and birds.

Around Christmas time each year, a magical festival takes place by the lake. Drawing in thousands of people, the area comes alive with an elaborately-lit Christmas tree, colorful decorations and a Christmas market.

Horsh Ehdén Nature Reserve

Located just 10-minutes away from Miziara is the magnificent Horsh Ehdén Nature Reserve. Rich in species biodiversity, the reserve has recorded more than 1,058 plant species, which accounts for nearly 40 percent of all native plant species in Lebanon. The reserve is home to the iconic cedar of Lebanon as well as other coniferous, deciduous and evergreen broadleaf trees. An impressive variety of wild animals, including the golden jackal and the red

fox, can also be spotted on occasion in the dense forest.

Hikes can be arranged with local guides. 70 601601, horshehden.org

✚ WHERE TO EAT

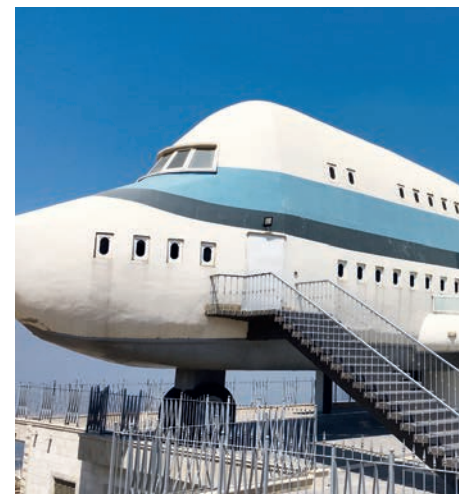
La Crepinette Restaurant

Founded in 1996, La Crepinette (06 570005/03 575841) is located in the heart of Miziara. It is well known for its delicious food and signature crêpes.

✚ WHERE TO SLEEP

Hotel Miziara

With 12 rooms and nine suites, Hotel Miziara is an elegant boutique property providing all the modern comforts one would expect. Most of the rooms have a breathtaking view of the mountains and the coast. An array of activities can be enjoyed on site or in the surrounding area including cycling. 06 570521/31, hotelmiziara.com



MTEIN



Photos: Krystel Riachi

As one of Mount Lebanon's oldest villages, Mtein is packed with history, culture and architectural heritage. Head over to the pretty village for a unique trip back in time

✦ GETTING THERE

Mtein is located around 35km from Beirut. Take the Metn Express Highway, passing Baabdat towards Douar, and continue as far as Bologna. Once you have reached Bologna, make a right all the way to Mtein. The road is signposted.

✦ WHAT TO DO

Mtein's Main Square

The Al Lamaayin Emirs took up residence in Mtein from the 16th century until 1840 and built the five palaces that can still be seen today. The beautiful mix of Arabic and Baroque styles, echoing the architecture of Deir el Qamar, remain signature traits of this village. The square now plays host to a number of festivals and music events throughout the year, such as the annual "3asha Qarawi" prepared by the Association of the Ladies of Mtein. The event hosts Mtein's youth club and several Lebanese singers.

Mtein Museum of Arts

Launched in 2013, the Mtein Museum of Arts boasts a superb collection of over 60 art pieces donated by Lebanese and non-Lebanese artists. The museum was an initiative of the municipality with the people

of Mtein to not only restore old spaces and buildings but to also encourage and preserve cultural awareness and celebrate the town's rich heritage. Visitors can admire the numerous paintings, sculptures and photographs, at what is the first museum of its kind in Lebanon, by contacting the municipality (04 296144) or by calling Naim Baroud (03 590861).

Old Silk Factories

Originally home to seven factories, Mtein was known for its abundant berry production and silk manufacturing. Today, you can still see the ruins of just one solitary silk factory, which stands defiantly just a few steps from the main square.

Outdoor Art

While wandering around the village, you will spot a number of impressive sculptures. The four pieces, pertaining to artists Nabil Helo, Nabil Basbous, Zaven Hadichian, and Shukrallah Fattouh, are beautiful works of art that decorate the streets of the town and complement its cultural wealth.

Museum of George Khairallah

Mtein is also home to the Museum of George Khairallah, containing 100 works and articles pertaining to the great painter. Khairallah's works have toured the world, making his museum a must-see for those visiting the village. To visit the museum, call Salim Akl (03 237281).

🍴 WHERE TO EAT

Casino Khairallah

Casino Khairallah (04 296588/03 312288) occupies a prime position on Mtein's main

square and serves traditional Lebanese food. A popular spot for lengthy lunches, the restaurant boasts an enviable view of the mountains facing the village.

Cabana

Located near the entrance to the village, Cabana serves home-cooked Lebanese food. There is a kids' play area too, making it a good choice for families.

Bakeries

Look out for the numerous bakeries dotted around the village, where you can indulge in a delicious *manakish* straight out of the oven.

🏠 WHERE TO SLEEP

Mtein Guesthouse

Mtein is part of the Lebanon Mountain Trail and has a guesthouse located in the main square. Owned by the Al Qontar family, the old house offers simple yet comfortable accommodation, and a unique opportunity to experience traditional life in the village. 03 236062



RACHAYA



Photo: Marwan Maalouly

Considered by many as one of Lebanon's most picturesque towns, Rachaya is a jewel in the Bekaa Valley. Located 85km southeast of Beirut, it attracts nature lovers and those looking to embrace traditional life

✦ GETTING THERE

Take the Beirut-Damascus Highway towards the Bekaa. Once you've reached Chtaura, take a right, passing by Taanayel, and continue to Majdel Anjar. Follow the Masnaa-Rachaya Road for about 25km and you'll reach the town.

✦ WHAT TO DO

Rashaya Citadel of Independence

Built as a palace by the Chehabi dynasty in the 18th century, the citadel is one of Rachaya's most famous landmarks. Under the French mandate, Lebanon's early national leaders were held captive there during the 1943 rebellion. This triggered outrage that later led to their release and eventually, Lebanon's independence. Considered a national monument of pride, the citadel is in part occupied by the Lebanese Armed Forces, with the remainder open to the public. 08 595100

Old Souks

The old souks of Rachaya date back to the 17th century and are among the oldest in Lebanon. Wander around and pop into some of the local shops famed for their traditional crafts, particularly silver jewelry

and stove-making (70 567755).

Old Churches

Notre Dame de la Deliverance, built in 1883, is the town's Greek Catholic Church. Full of rustic charm, the church's peeling blue-arched ceiling is enchanting. The Greek Orthodox Church of the Virgin Mary is on a street just off the souk. It features a simple stone interior punctuated with opulent chandeliers. The oldest Syriac Catholic Church, Mar Moussa al Habachi, is also located in Rachaya. Dating back to the 17th century, it includes a rare 500-year old icon of its Patron Saint Moses the Ethiopian. The fourth church of the town is the Saint Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church.

Local Traditions

Don't leave Rachaya without visiting the factory where they make molasses (03 856908) and where beekeepers like Rechrach Naji make honey (03 701064).

Hiking and trekking

Rachaya's natural beauty makes it an ideal hiking destination. Limestone rocks, pine forests and fertile lands with bountiful fruit trees define the rugged landscape. Enjoy hiking along the flanks of Mount Hermon, the sacred Mount of Transfiguration.

🍴 WHERE TO EAT

Enjoy the *shawarma* and lemonade of Hajj Nicolas Maalouli (76 992420) at the entrance of the souk.

Layali Wadi el Taym

Known for its tasty grills and mouthwatering *mezze*, Layali Wadi el Taym (08 530533/03 665317) is a popular restaurant in the town.

Mashhour

Located on the Dahr el Ahmar main road, Mashhour (08 590199) is a bona fide Lebanese restaurant offering everything you would expect, from *mezze* to succulent grills.

Monte Santo

Overlooking Mount Hermon, Monte Santo (70 840680) offers guests an extensive menu of delicious Lebanese and international dishes as well as a great view.

Local Coops

Visit NGO Beit el Rif (82 776246/70 064653), Rachaya Gardens (03 891518) or Wadi el Taym (71 349410) to taste local *mouneh*, including sweet grape molasses, a specialty of the region.

🏠 WHERE TO SLEEP

Al Kanz Hotel and Restaurant

The hotel offers 10 comfortable rooms and views of Mount Hermon. There's also an on-site restaurant. 08 530888, alkanzrestaurant.com

Bellavista Apartments

Located in the old souks, the apartments are a simple, convenient choice. 08 5956766/03 504905

Haramoun Guesthouse

71 219472

Dar Mehdi

03 963378

Kamal el Sahili Guesthouse

03 615702

Visit rashaya.org to plan your visit.

TAANAYEL



Photos: Rachelle Zahran

Located southeast of Chtaura, just a few kilometers from Zahle, is the pretty village of Taanayel. With its bountiful farms, breathtaking scenery and vineyards, Taanayel is a true haven that can be visited any time during the year

✦ GETTING THERE

Taanayel is approximately one hour from Beirut. Take the Beirut-Damascus Highway out of the city until you reach Dahr el Baidar. From there, continue on to Masnaa Road toward Chtaura, where the route straight ahead leads you to Taanayel.

✦ WHAT TO DO

Domain Taanayel

With hectares of trees shedding their leaves in the fall, a visit to this pretty area is the perfect way to embrace the season. For an entrance fee of just 2,000 LBP, you can take a stroll through the woods and admire the indigenous flora and fauna. You can even rent a bike for an additional charge.

08 540066

Taanayel Lake

Indulge in some much-needed quiet time by the stunning Taanayel Lake, where you're guaranteed a beautiful view. For a unique experience, you can take a trip in a horse-drawn carriage or even ride a horse next to the lake. All activities are weather dependent.

Massaya Winery

This fabulous winery is best visited on a Sunday, when a tour of the vineyard is organized. After the tour, visitors can enjoy a scrumptious buffet of cheese, wine and a selection of cold cuts. Much of the wooden furniture, namely the chairs, tables and bar, are repurposed barrels of wine.

08 510135, massaya.com

✦ WHERE TO EAT

Taanayel Convent/Deir Taanayel

For a typical Lebanese breakfast head to Deir Taanayel (08 540066), a beautiful convent dating back to 1860. The building is now a fertile space for the convent's artisanal manufacturing, where visitors can taste some of the healthiest dairy products while admiring the view of countless hectares of fruit trees and vineyards.

Khan el Maksoud

In keeping with the region's penchant for healthy eating, Khan el Maksoud (08 544881/03 124279) serves locally-sourced food products straight to your plate. Its simple decor is contrasted by vibrant tablecloths and surrounding greenery. The restaurant is popular, so reservations are a must. Note it is closed on Mondays.

Casino Hannouche and Restaurant

Casino Hannouche and Restaurant in Chtaura (08 540136) deviates from the traditional restaurants nearby to offer a luxuriously-built and extensively-decorated indoor and outdoor space. Serving up traditional Lebanese food, it's a great option for larger groups.

🏠 WHERE TO SLEEP

Ecologie Tanail

Guaranteeing an unforgettable experience, the Ecologie Tanail is a living compound built by Arc en Ciel using traditional materials. The property, which is conveniently located near many local attractions, has a wonderful on-site restaurant serving wholesome food. Guests can also enjoy a range of activities from hiking and cycling to horseback riding.

08 544881, arcenciel.org

Chtaura Park Hotel

Just nine-minutes away from the Taanayel Lake lies the Chtaura Park Hotel, a 75-room complex offering high-end accommodation and great views. Perfect for families, the hotel is within close proximity to all of Taanayel's beautiful attractions.

08 540011, chtauraparkhotel.com



TANNOURINE



Photos: Peter Ghanime

Nature and history collide to form one of the most exquisite places in Lebanon, the beautiful town of Tannourine. Located in the Batroun District, Tannourine boasts a wonderful ecosystem and historical treasures hidden in every corner

✦ GETTING THERE

Tannourine is located just over 70km north of Beirut, nestled in the mountains. Take the coastal road in the direction of Tripoli. After passing Byblos, continue on towards Batroun and exit the highway onto the Batroun-Tannourine Road. The town is signposted from there on.

✦ WHAT TO DO

Tannourine Cedars Forest

The Tannourine Cedars Forest Nature Reserve is a definite must-see if you're visiting the area. The forest is one of the densest in the country and has avoided heavy tourist activity thanks to its unique topography. A great place for hiking and exploring, you're sure to run into unique fauna and flora on the way while marveling at the evergreen cedars that embody Lebanon's history and continuity.

06 500550/03 815029, arztannourine.org

Baatara Sinkhole

Perhaps one of the most well known of Tannourine's natural wonders, the Baatara sinkhole is a fascinating gorge and waterfall.

Discovered in 1952, the site has three natural bridges, rising one above the other. During spring, visitors can see a beautiful cascade behind the bridges.

The location is perfect for thrill seekers who wish to do some climbing, caving or exploring, weather permitting.

Roman Aqueduct

One of the hidden treasures of the region is the Roman Aqueduct in Tannourine el Tahta. A structure of simple arches and stone, the aqueduct was used to transport water for agriculture and daily use. Beyond this structure lies a cliff ideal for rock climbing.

Abandoned Village of Ain-al-Raha

This once inhabited village is home to sixth-century churches and monasteries, some of the oldest evidence of Christianity in the region. A walk through the village, located in the higher mountain area of Tannourine el Tahta, is like a journey back in time.

✦ WHERE TO EAT

Moultaka Al Nahrein

Possibly one of the most scenic restaurants in the region, Moultaka Al Nahrein (03 536874) gets its name from its famous location. Lying at the intersection of two rivers, the restaurant offers traditional Lebanese food coupled with a picture-perfect view.

Wadi el Deir

Situated on the Al Jaouz River, Wadi el Deir (03 523563) is a family-run restaurant serving up all sorts of traditional delicacies such as stuffed eggplant and goat's cheese

in oil. Named after the 1,500-year old monastery Deir Mar Mtannios, it's a great option for a lazy afternoon. Call in advance as it is not open daily during the winter.

🏠 WHERE TO SLEEP

Mountain View Tannourine

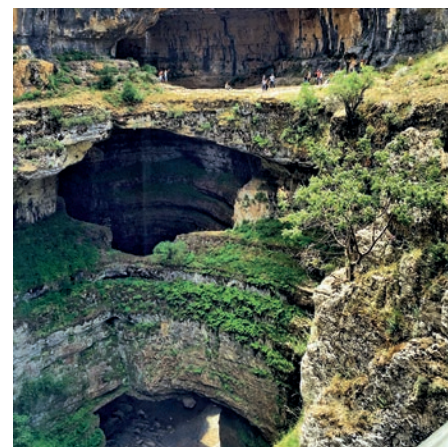
Overlooking the mountains of Tannourine, the recently opened Mountain View Tannourine is a haven of tranquility, with all the utilities to make you feel right at home. The fully-furnished wooden bungalows are luxurious, boasting a garden and a great view of the mountains.

03 497775

Eco Dalida

At the center of all activities in the region, near the entrance of the Tannourine Cedars Reserve, stands Eco Dalida. With exceptional views from its terrace, the eco lodge offers guests a comfortable stay, with a cozy communal area and a restaurant serving authentic Lebanese food.

03 679055





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RURAL ESCAPES

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BEIT BRIDI

Located on the outskirts of Batroun, Beit Bridi, conceived by Bernard and Zeina Bridi, is a six-room, two-suite guesthouse.

Boasting views of both the mountain and the sea, Beit Bridi offers its guests a restaurant serving local and international food, a kids' area, and vineyard. There is also a billiard room and a reading area.

The structure's exterior is clad with a natural stone skin and the warm interior is an amalgam of French, Italian, Arabian, Moroccan, Turkish and Lebanese tones in varying intensities. Zeina Bridi lives there to personally take care of guests, who arrive as visitors and leave as friends.

76 333569

BYOUT GHALBOUN

Offering charming bed and breakfast accommodation in the village of Ghalboun (Jbeil District), Byout Ghalboun comprises two houses: Beit El Dayaa and Beit El Baydar, with further expansion planned.

Beit El Baydar is in the middle of a large lot endowed with a circular *baydar*, where wheat was threshed in the past. A garden and an organic farm provide fruits and vegetables for visitors to enjoy at breakfast, served on the large terrace.

Beit El Dayaa is a three-story, Lebanese-inspired house consisting of four bedrooms, a penthouse suite, an open kitchen, chimney, dining and living room.

03 532756



lebanontraveler.com



BKERZAY

Nestled in Horch Baakline, Bkerzay offers guests a unique getaway as rich and diverse as nature itself. The property offers exceptionally comfortable rooms, food prepared by international chef Hussein Hadid, a traditional hammam spa, an infinity pool, and a relaxing garden, perfect for morning yoga.

Adventure seekers can enjoy a trail in the lush Baakline forest. Workshops are also available with master ceramists for guests interested in learning the ancestral craft of pottery.

An on-site shop sells a number of local products, such as honey from Bkerzay bees, thyme, olive oil and organic fruits and vegetables.

03 512020, bkerzay.com

AL HAUSH

Al Haush began as an agriculture project when Salim Saab bought a piece of land in the Bekaa after his return from Mexico in the 1920s. Being the region that reminded him most of Mexico, with its expansive plains and beautiful landscapes, Saab established his farm there.

Today, Al Haush has opened its doors to the public, inviting visitors to enjoy an authentic experience in the heart of Bekaa. Renovating its barn area to accommodate five pretty rooms, the property also offers its guests a pool area, a Bedouin corner, a mini-agriculture museum, a farm, a beautiful terrace, organic breakfast, agriculture activities and workshops.

03 911110



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Glorious Guesthouses

Escape the daily grind and immerse yourself in the beauty of two new additions to the **L'Hôte Libanais** family

DAR CAMELIA

Hidden in Tyre's old quarter is L'Hôte Libanais's most recent family member in the south, Dar Camelia. This eight-room boutique hotel was carefully restored as a beautiful encounter between a Moroccan riad and a traditional Lebanese home. Its interiors reflect Tyre's unique heritage as a prominent Phoenician city and Mediterranean trade post, blending East and West with a mélange of rich details. Artisanal closets and mirrors salvaged from Beirut's antique stores; luscious Moroccan drapery and Indonesian carved doors; jewel-toned walls and impressive canopy beds - the exquisite details make for an unforgettable experience in the heart of one of the world's oldest inhabited cities.

What to do

As one of the most notable Phoenician cities, Tyre boasts two large archaeological sites, Al Bass and Al Mina, that are must-visits for curious travelers. The sea is an important part of everyday life in the city, so visitors can engage in various water activities and enjoy the city's famous fresh fish.

Rooms at Dar Camelia start at 225,000 LBP (150 USD) per night.



Photo: René Schulthoff



Photo: Paul Gorra

ZANZOUN

It's no secret that Beirut's heritage homes are slowly disappearing, taking with them an essential part of the city's, and country's, rich history. Tucked in one of Mar Mikhael's quiet streets is Zanzoun, a recently restored traditional Lebanese home and L'Hôte Libanais's most recent addition in Beirut, celebrating the Levant with its meticulous decor, chosen by the owner Zeina. Lover of the Orient, Zeina made her home a celebration of the art and history that makes the region so unique. The guesthouse comprises three rooms, decorated with a mix of modern and antique items, rich and warm colors that reflect, in many ways, Beirut's vibrant soul. The home's understated elegance is complemented by the quietude of its courtyard where guests can relax, read a book, and take in the unexpected calm of this enclave in the heart of busy Beirut. This juxtaposition of sound, color and history is what makes homes like Zanzoun so rare and special.

What to do

The guesthouse, located just off one of Beirut's most vibrant streets in Mar Mikhael, has plenty of restaurants, bars and art galleries nearby to explore. Just a stone's throw from Zanzoun is Kalei Coffee, a specialty coffeeshop and restaurant with a lovely outdoor space. For those looking for a delicious bite to eat, Tawlet Beirut, the farm-to-table restaurant in the city, is a five-minute walk from Zanzoun.

Rooms at Zanzoun start at 180,000 LBP (120 USD) per night.

Text by: Reem Joudi

hotelibanaais.com



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Overlooking the Mediterranean sea, Le Royal Hotel and Resort is a haven of relaxation and comfort. With a welcoming and dedicated staff, we offer the best Beirut has to offer from our pleasant rooms and suites, to our various dining outlets, to our soothing Spa services, Le Royal treats you to a hotel experience like no other.

NEW IN TOWN

Taste & Flavors, the ultimate food and lifestyle magazine, serves up some ideas in Beirut to feed your appetite this season. For more suggestions, visit tasteandflavors.com

AL FALAMANKI RAOUCHE

Experience a whole new side to Lebanese cuisine at Al Falamanki Rouche and be mesmerized by the awesome view of the rocks. The restaurant has a charming outdoor terrace, perfect for lazy afternoons, and a delicious menu to match.

What's special? Shrimp *fatteh*, seasonal fresh juices and Khalil's *saj*.

Charles de Gaulle Street, Raouche, 01 808011/78 808011



BEROE

Having recently opened a branch in Gemmayze, Beroe boasts an awesome setup that blends comfort and modern style. The restaurant has an exciting international menu and an impressive selection of cocktails.

What's special? Crispy beef in a soft bun, the homemade pasta with squid ribbons and the Umami burger.

Pasteur Street, Gemmayze, 01 567494



Photo: Alain Sauma



APPETITO TRATTORIA

Brush up on your Italian while savoring the delightful flavors of traditional Italian dishes at Appetito Trattoria. This rustic restaurant provides its customers with a cozy escape from the hustle and bustle of the city.

What's special? The burrata salad, the calamari alla griglia salad and, of course, delicious pizzas: Caprina, frutti de mare and many more!

Pasteur Street, Gemmayze, 01 566486

KHAROUF BEIRUT

Eating slow-cooked lamb on the go or as a fast lunch is now possible thanks to Kharouf Beirut. This hidden gem in the heart of Mar Mikhael offers a wide variety of signature dishes, sandwiches and platters.

What's special? The *hummus mkhawraf*, the pomegranate *kharouf* and the *kharouf* bites.

Pharaon Street, Mar Mikhael, 76 899889



L'ATELIER DU MIEL WORKSHOP & GARDEN CAFÉ

The L'Atelier du Miel Workshop and Garden Café is an oasis of calm in the middle of a busy city. The cafe brings to the table a real taste of locally-produced food and natural ingredients.

What's special? Goat *labne* balls and coffee *achta* cream.

Armenia Street, Mar Mikhael, 01 565975





HOME SWEET HOME

Guaranteed to make you feel warm and fuzzy inside, Home Sweet Home is a wholesome cafe, eatery and store. Charmingly decorated with soothing colors, it's an ideal spot for a quiet get-together with friends.

What's special? Fish and chips, the risotto and any of the breakfast items.

Alexander Fleming Street, Mar Mikhael, 01 566656

MEATS & BREAD

For all the meat lovers out there, Meats & Bread is a must. From mouthwatering baby back ribs to out-of-this-world WTF burgers, Meats & Bread has created a cool place to enjoy great food. The homemade barbecue sauce includes *kharoub* molasses, giving a Lebanese touch to classic American cuisine.

What's special? The home-smoked brisket, WTF® burger and smoked salmon.

*Gouraud Street, Gemmayze, 01 449060/
71 959898*

SIP BEIRUT

Located in a pink building dating back to 1956, Sip Beirut is a charming cafe that serves specialty coffee. With exposed vintage walls, a cozy interior and a lovely terrace, it's a great place to experiment and find your favorite cup. The cafe also serves light dishes and wine.

What's special? Ethiopian single origin cup and red rice salad.

Gouraud Street, Gemmayze, 01 567569



SWISS BUTTER

Swiss Butter has come up with a simple concept of creating a menu that serves only three items: beef, chicken and fish. All three dishes are served in a huge pan of special Swiss Butter sauce, a generous serving of mesclun salad, freshly-baked baguette, chili flakes and a choice of fries or baked potato.

What's special? The molten chocolate fondant, pain perdu and the secret Swiss butter sauce.

Gouraud Street, Gemmayze, 01 444480



Trail around Achrafieh

With its delightful streets, full of well-preserved buildings, our friends at Zawarib take us around one of Beirut's most cherished neighborhoods



Similar to the cycles of life, Achrafieh has undergone metamorphosis time and time again. During the Civil War, the historic Beit Beirut in Sodeco acted as a cocoon for Christian militia in the combat zone. Today Sodeco, Monot, Sassine and Sioufi each harbor an ideal playground for Beirutis to collaborate and create brilliant concepts in design, art, cuisine and more.

AROUND SODECO

Strategically encompassed by the majority of Beirut's influential neighborhoods, a good reflection of the above statement lies in **Vinotheque's (6)** superb selection of Lebanon's boutique wines. Enter, savor and explore

the result of thousands of years' worth of wine making.

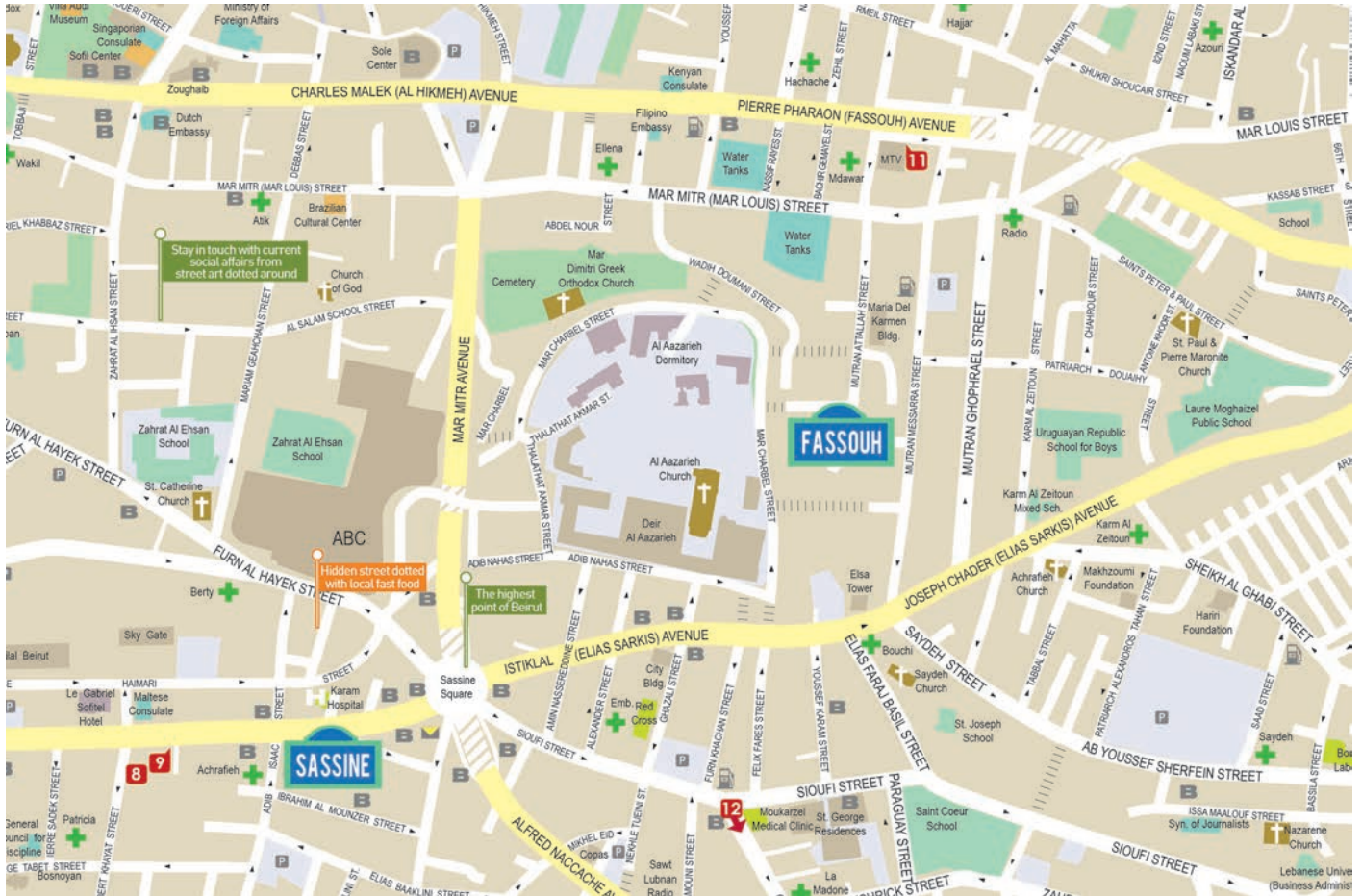
Around the corner are three spots that represent the main components of Beirut's ever-pulsating nature respectively: **Pâte à Choux (5)** for persistence, **Café Sho (4)** for diversity and **Al Falamanki (3)** for community. Over the decades, Pâte à Choux's scrumptious baked goods have made it an ever-delicious landmark.

Meanwhile, Café Sho's pioneering fusion of Asian and Mediterranean cuisine directly coincides with Beirut's historically outward nature, while Al Falamanki's faithful embrace of the Middle Eastern culture brings a sense of community in the same way that the city conveys a sense of

belonging to all those who visit.

AROUND MONOT & ABDEL WAHAB EL INGLIZI

Abdel Wahab El Inglizi Street and Monot Street both developed their charming architecture during the French mandate and while the influence is still prominent, the intertwining electric cables and persistent scent of orange blossom are pure Levant. Similarly, establishments in the area seem to prosper. **Hole in the Wall (1)**, a live music bar and **Tsunami (7)**, a traditional Japanese restaurant have celebrated their 18th and 15th anniversaries respectively. Monot, however, is also a stomping ground for younger businesses, such as **Eat Sunshine (2)**, Beirut's first organic eatery



...serving breakfast, lunch and coffee in a sun-room patio.

AROUND SASSINE

Closer to Sassine, the highest point in Beirut, a cluster of apparel and coffee shops maintain their popularity as well as a sense of nostalgia by virtue of their 90s shop signs. Here too, young entrepreneurs have chosen to open shop, thus adding even more layers to the mix. Two neighboring spots include **Hamsa Yoga Space (8)**, set in a lovely heritage home and **Cantina Sociale (9)**. While one offers excellent yoga practice with the breeze from its surrounding green trees, the other is a cozy local hangout, offering hearty food and local wine tasting

every night of the week. Both provide experiences with a difference in even more unique settings – a remarkable reflection of contemporary Beirut’s ever-changing nature.

AROUND SIOUFI

Further east, Sioufi feels a lot more like a village where a promenade can quickly turn into a hike. More residential yet still holding hidden gems, Sioufi is home to one of Lebanon’s boutique winery shops, **Chateau Qanafar (12)**. The area also has one of the finest gardens in the city, meticulously manicured with views down to the valley and across the Beirut River. Another welcome feature of the Sioufi public garden is its public WiFi service.

AROUND FASSOUH

Humble by nature, Fassouh offers affordable housing to the youth of Beirut, thus keeping the buzz of its neighboring districts alive. This year, **Instruments Garage (11)**, an extensive music shop located in the area, celebrates its 15th anniversary. With cuneiform tablets providing evidence of how long ago music was first produced in the region, perhaps it’s no surprise that music shops, shows and concerts continue to thrive.

Finally, art and design establishments are well dispersed across Achrafieh. **Kaf (10)** is one fun art gallery tucked away by the Mar Nicolas public garden, with a unique collection of works by distinguished and local artists.

SAVE THE DATE



With so much happening in the coming months, here are some cool events to mark on your calendar

NOVEMBER

OLIVE OIL TOUR IN BAINO

Where: Baino, Akkar

When: Throughout November until late December

Visit the home of House of Zejd to hand-pick your own olives and learn all about the extraction of olive oil. You can also enjoy a walk around Baino's nature reserve and lake. 01 338003, olivetrade.com

BEIRUT ART FILM FESTIVAL

Where: Metropolis Empire Sofil Cinemas, Achrafieh

When: 6-25

For its third edition, the Beirut Art Film Festival will host screenings of over 50 films and documentaries about all things art. Some of the films feature Jérôme Bosch, Bach, Oum Kalthoum and The Beatles. 01 999666, bafflebanon.org

GOURMET WEEK

Where: In and around Beirut

When: 13-17

Gourmet Week celebrates food culture in Beirut. With over 30 of the leading restaurants to choose from, guests can take advantage of promotions including discounts and special set menus. The event is open to everyone, but booking is essential as tables at the participating restaurants are limited. gourmetweek.org

SALON DU CHOCOLAT BEIRUT

Where: BIEL, Beirut

When: 16-18

A must for chocolate lovers, the Salon du Chocolat Beirut returns for its fourth edition bringing with it over 60 stands

showcasing the latest in chocolate, pastry and confectionery.

The amazing chocolate Fashion Show brings Lebanese designers and renowned pastry chefs together for a one-of-a-kind catwalk with dresses made of chocolate. This year's show welcomes designer to the stars Jean Louis Sabaji, who will be collaborating with Lebanese master consultant chef Charles Azar to create the Fashion Show's masterpiece.

There will also be an incredible chocolate sculpture on display, created by the Lebanese artist Rudy Rahme and chef Charles Azar.

Visitors to the event can watch more than 30 of Lebanon's top pastry chefs and consultants in live demonstrations at the Choco Demo, and kids can get involved at the Salon du Chocolat Junior, a special kids' tasting area. salonduchocolatbeirut.com

BEIRUT COOKING FESTIVAL

Where: BIEL, Beirut

When: 16-18

Spotlighting the very best in food, wine, spirits, kitchen equipment and more, the Beirut Cooking Festival this year celebrates its seventh edition. Visitors will be able to discover a whole range of items, from bigger brands to artisanal goods, and browse more than 100 stands. In addition, over 30 of the finest chefs and beverage and lifestyle experts will be present to share with the public their passion for food, drink, health and wellbeing through a series of live demonstrations and workshops at the Chefs' Theater.

Furthermore, the Librairie Gourmande will

have a large selection of cookbooks available for purchase as well as book signings with well-known authors.

beirutcookingfestival.com

STOMP

Where: Casino du Liban

When: 17-18

The unstoppable smash-hit STOMP heads to the Casino du Liban. Inspired by the commotion of everyday life, the show mixes sound, dance, theatre and comedy using ordinary objects such as trash lids, Zippo lighters and kitchen sinks. ticketingboxoffice.com

BLACK FRIDAY MARKET LEBANON

Where: BIEL, Beirut

When: 23-26

The Urban Group and Lebanese Cultural Festivals Association will be hosting Lebanon's first Black Friday Market. The market will deliver a unique shopping experience full of bargains.

[f Black Friday Market Lebanon](#)

DECEMBER

BEIRUT CHANTS FESTIVAL

Where: Multiple locations around Beirut

When: 1-23

The 10th edition of the Beirut Chants Festival brings more than 20 concerts to the capital in celebration of the festive season. The concerts include Christmas carol singing, classical music and ethnic songs. Beirut Chants acts as a platform for local and international performers and orchestras, and spreads a message of peace, hope and tolerance. Entrance is free.

beirutchants.com

BEIRUT AND BEYOND INTERNATIONAL MUSIC FESTIVAL


Where: The Grand Factory
When: 7-10

Promoting music from around the region, Beirut & Beyond will be hosting a series of concerts featuring Lebanese and international artists. An exciting line-up of DJs will follow the performances.
beirutandbeyond.net

CHRISTMAS AT THE VILLA

Where: Villa Linda Sursock, Achrafieh
When: 8-10

Enjoy the Christmas spirit and festivities, and participate in daily fundraising events to support local NGOs.

 *Christmas at the Villa 2017*

ELTON JOHN IN CONCERT

Where: Forum De Beyrouth
When: 10

Sir Elton John and his band will perform in Beirut as part of the "Wonderful Crazy Night" tour. The legendary singer, who has sold over 250 million albums and has won five Grammy awards, is among the most popular and acclaimed artists of modern times.
ticketingboxoffice.com

CHRISTMAS IN ACTION

Where: Trainstation, Mar Mikhael
When: 13-17

Ideal for adults and kids, with festive treats, shopping and entertainment, Christmas in Action celebrates its sixth edition this year.

 *Christmas in Action 2017*

THE NEW YORK METROPOLITAN OPERA & THE BOLSHOI BALLET LIVE SCREENINGS

Where: Empire Premiere, Sodeco Square
When: 18 (other dates throughout January to May 2018)

Empire Cinemas exclusively presents the latest season of the New York Metropolitan

Opera (seven live broadcasts) as well as the Russian Bolshoi Ballet (five live broadcasts) to its screens. Catch the first screening of the classic Christmas story "The Nutcracker" and book for other favorites throughout 2018.
 01 616707/6, *empirepremiere.com*

FEBRUARY

AL BUSTAN FESTIVAL

Where: Al Bustan Hotel
When: February 13-March 21

Al Bustan Festival celebrates international music and performing arts, including opera and classical concerts as well as dance and theatre performances.
albustanfestival.com

APRIL

LMTA THRU-WALK

Where: From Andqet to Marjayoun
When: 1

Discover over 75 towns and villages by joining the yearly Thru-Walk with the Lebanon Mountain Trail Association. The long-distance hiking trail extends 470km from Andqet in the north to Marjayoun in the south.
lebanontrail.org

BIPOD

Where: Around Beirut
When: 11-22

The annual contemporary dance platform will celebrate its 14th edition, bringing to the stage a large number of local and international dance companies. BIPOD is considered one of the most important dance festivals in the region.
maqamat.org

TRIPOLI FILM FESTIVAL

Where: Tripoli
When: 19-26

The fifth edition of the festival will honor the late Lebanese filmmaker Randa

Chahal by showcasing her main works, including *Le Cerf-Volant*, *Les Infidèles* and *Ecrans de Sable*.
tripoli-filmfestival.org

BEIRUT FASHION WEEK

Where: BIEL, Beirut
When: TBC

One of the biggest red-carpet events in Lebanon will be hosting its first runway show of the year. The last day of the show will include the "Beirut Fashion Awards," when a scholarship to Europe will be granted to an aspiring designer.


03 961141,  *beirutfashionweek*

REGULAR ACTIVITIES

HIKE with **Vamos Todos** (03 917190, *vamos-todos.com*), **Dale Corazon** (70 986118/70 997062, *dalecorazon.com*), **33 North** (03 454996, *33-north.com*) and **Footprints Nature Club** (03 876112, *footprintsclub.com*).

BIKE with **Cycle Circle** (03 126675, *cycling-circle.com*), **Beirut by Bike** (03 435524) and **CycloSport** (01 446792/03 974736, *cyclosporlb.com*)

CLIMB with the **Lebanese Climbing Association** (03 112338/03 211822, *climbinglebanon.com*)

SKETCH with the **Urban Sketchers Lebanon** (78 891855,  *uskLeb*)

Visit *lebanontraveler.com* to keep track of all the exciting events taking place across the country

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JOE BARZA



Celebrity chef and TV personality **Joe Barza** takes us around his beautiful hometown of Tyre in South Lebanon

WHAT WAS IT LIKE GROWING UP IN TYRE?

The magic of growing up in Tyre is etched in my mind; hearing the sound of the sea, the stories of the fishermen, watching housewives wait impatiently for them to return with their daily catch. I witnessed a lot of beautiful things that became part of my daily routine.

HOW HAS BEING FROM TYRE INFLUENCED THE WAY YOU COOK?

I was highly influenced by it, not least because I use fish in a lot of my dishes. Growing up by the sea helped shape who I am today.

YOU HAVE LONG REPRESENTED LEBANON AT COUNTLESS INTERNATIONAL FOOD EVENTS. WHAT DO YOU ALWAYS TAKE WITH YOU TO REMIND YOU OF HOME?

Wherever I go, the spirit of the Lebanon, the reflection of the sea and the warmth of Tyre follow me.

“ GROWING UP BY THE SEA HELPED SHAPE WHO I AM TODAY ”

WHAT LEBANESE INGREDIENT COULD YOU NOT LIVE WITHOUT AND WHY?

That's a difficult question to answer. I would say *tahini*, *kishk* and sumac are very important ingredients in Lebanese cuisine, used in almost every traditional dish. My kitchen is well-stocked with all of them!

WHEN YOU'RE NOT BUSY IN THE KITCHEN, WHAT DO YOU ENJOY DOING?

Time spent with my family is sacred. We could be sitting around not doing very much, but those precious moments together mean the world to me.

PICK THREE WORDS THAT DESCRIBE LEBANON...

Well, I believe there are three things that best describe the place - the people, the food and the fact that it's quite simply the best place on earth!

TYRE TIPS FROM CHEF JOE

Wander around: The Christian Quarter – it's so charming with its colorful houses.

Have a coffee at: Kamil Doro Coffee Shop, where you'll be served the tastiest coffee.

Grab a bite to eat at: Baroud Restaurant and Le Phenicien. They both offer delicious Lebanese food.

Escape the crowd at: Fanar, the lighthouse. You're guaranteed an epic view of the sea.

Don't miss: Watching the fisherman as they cast their nets.

Buy: Fish, and plenty of it!

Don't leave without: Visiting the Roman Hippodrome and the Al Mina ruins. It's fascinating to see thousands of years of history before your very eyes.

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