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Cycle Lebanon

LEBANON - TRIP CODE CLL

CYCLING

Why book this trip?

Discover Lebanon's beautiful rural heartland, dramatic mountain scenery and warm hospitality on this cycle adventure. With a cuisine as rich and varied as its history, Lebanon is a small country where east meets west, with surprises at every corner.

- **Beautiful cycling** - In the Chouf Mountains, Mount Lebanon range and Qadisha Valley
- **Ancient cultures** - Remarkable Phoenician, Roman, Ottoman and Crusader sites
- **Lebanese food** - Feast on Levantine cuisine and try fine wine in the Bekaa Valley

**INCLUDED MEALS**Breakfast: 7
Dinner: 2**TRIP STAFF**Explore Tour
Leader / Cycle
guide
Driver(s)**TRANSPORT**Bus
Bicycle**ACCOMMODATION**1 nights
comfortable
convent
5 nights
comfortable hotel
1 nights simple
monastery**CYCLING****GRADE:**
Moderate To
Challenging**GROUP SIZE:**

10 - 16

Itinerary

Itineraries on some departure dates may differ, please select the itinerary that you wish to explore.

DAY 1 - Join trip in Beirut

Beirut, the country's cosmopolitan capital known for its art, culture and fashion, has been inhabited for over 5000 years through Phoenician, Roman, Crusader and Ottoman times. The city was largely rebuilt after the heavy damage sustained in the Lebanese Civil War between 1975 and 1990 and hotel is located in the Hamra neighbourhood and was used as a base for international journalists in this turbulent period.

If you would like to receive a complimentary airport transfer today, you'll need to arrive into Beirut-Rafic Hariri International Airport (BEY), which is around 20 minutes from the centre. The Leader plans to meet you in the hotel reception at 7pm for the welcome meeting and for those that wish, there is the chance to go out for dinner. There are no included excursions planned today, so you are free to arrive in Beirut at any time. Should you miss the meeting, your Leader will inform you of any essential information as soon as you catch up. If your flight arrives earlier in the day, perhaps you might choose to have a stroll on the coastal footpath.

Today is your first opportunity to delve into the delicious local food and drink. The Lebanese, quite rightly, take great pride in their varied and healthy cuisine and many of the ingredients are grown locally and eaten in season. Tables are generously covered with small mezze sharing dishes such as fresh tabbouleh salad, hummus, grilled meats, fish, seafood and baba ganoush.

**ACCOMMODATION:**

Le Commodore Hotel (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: NONE

DAY 2 - Cycle in the Chouf Mountains. Explore Sidon's Crusader Castle. Overnight in Deir Al-Qamar

We start our first ride from Barouk after a 1.5 hour drive from Beirut. After some time to get comfortable with our bikes, making any required adjustments, we start cycling. The Chouf Mountains form the southern section of Lebanon's mountainous spine and the Mediterranean landscapes provide a beautiful backdrop for today's ride to Jezzine. The Chouf is the heartland of the Maronite Christians and Druze minority, and we will cycle through villages of these breakaway religious groups that have long made the area their home, fleeing persecution and sectarian rivalry. There are some steep sections to cycle up today, though nothing more than a few kilometres maximum each time, more often less distance, as is the case with every ride on this holiday. After lunch we drive to Sidon (1hr) to explore this historic port town. Once a rich and flourishing Phoenician city with trade links to ancient Egypt and beyond, the crusaders built a sea castle here in the 12th century. We plan to visit the castle, renovated khans and the old souk. Finally we drive (1hr) back up into the Chouf Mountains to Deir Al-Qamar and our hotel for the night.

Our total cycling distance today is approximately 40 kilometres (820 metres total accumulated ascent and 960 m descent).



ACCOMMODATION:
La Bastide (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 3 - Cycle descent into the fertile Bekaa Valley for wine-tasting. Visit remarkable Roman temples of Baalbek

After breakfast we drive a short distance to visit the restored 19th century Beiteddine Palace complex. Built in the period of Ottoman rule on the remains of a former Druze hermitage, this beautiful palace is an intricate mix of Italian Baroque and Arabian styles. Following this visit we drive for 45 minutes higher into the Chouf Mountains and are soon rewarded with views over the Bekaa Valley and beyond as we cross the range. Today's ride is relatively short as, after a short ascent, we descend rapidly to the valley floor and continue in the valley, riding on backroads past many vineyards to the town of Ghazee. After lunch we drive through the Bekaa Valley, making a stop at a winery along the way to learn about the ancient heritage of wine-making in the Lebanon and of course to sample the wine. Upon arrival to Baalbek we plan to visit the vast Roman ruins. The jewel in Lebanon's crown, Baalbek is one of the best preserved and most important Roman sites. The almost intact Temple of Bacchus is a highlight with its ornately decorated stonework and giant columns. Not far from the site, a Roman quarry reveals some of the giant stones that were being prepared for construction.

Our total cycling distance today is approximately 31 kilometres (120 metres total accumulated ascent and 995 m descent).



ACCOMMODATION:
Palmyra Hotel (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 4 - A beautiful ride around Mount Sannine past ski resorts and mountain towns

After breakfast we drive (2 hours) out of the Bekaa Valley and into the Mount Lebanon range to Zaarour. We start cycling in cool mountain air at around 2000 metres above sea level with views of Mount Sannine and our route immediately descends on good roads to Baskinta. The town is known as an outdoor hub with ski, hiking and biking routes nearby. It was also the native village of Mikhail Naimy, one of Lebanon's greatest thinkers and men of letters famous for his spiritual writings. We continue cycling on quiet backroads in a poor state of repair, with some steep short ascents along the way, taking in superb mountain scenery. The ride ends after a long descent to Faraiya village and we drive from here to our accommodation near Mayrouba. Tonight we stay in modest comfort, with en suite rooms, in the Saydet Al Nour Convent for the Sisters of Nazareth.

Our total cycling distance today is approximately 46 kilometres (970 metres total accumulated ascent and 1150 m descent).



ACCOMMODATION:

Saydet El Nour (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Convent



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST & DINNER

DAY 5 - Scenic cycle to Tannourine. Discover the Qadisha Valley and walk in cedar forest

We start the day with a short drive to help avoid a very steep section. Our cycle route today is a beautiful ride through the mountains, on a road in a poor state of repair that few tourists travel on, with some steep ascents, past terraced farmland and villages. We plan to have lunch at the end of the ride in Tannourine and from here we drive (1hr) to the stunningly beautiful and verdant Qadisha Valley - translated as the Holy Valley on account of the large number of Christian monasteries founded here and hidden away by the towering walls of the gorge. The cedar tree is a national symbol that features on the flag of Lebanon but rapid deforestation means that only a few small areas of protected ancient cedar forest remain and we plan a short walk in the Cedars of God reserve on arrival to admire these mighty trees. Finally we continue by vehicle to our accommodation at St Anthony's Monastery located deep in the valley.

Dating back to the 12th century, the monastery is still in operation today under the control of the Lebanese Maronite Order, home to resident hermits and the centre of many pilgrimages. We'll be spending the night in the simply-furnished guesthouse that has been built within the monastery grounds. The rooms are either twin or triple share and all have en-suite bathrooms.

Our total cycling distance today is approximately 37 kilometres (820 metres total accumulated ascent and 980 m descent).



ACCOMMODATION:

St Antoine Monastery (or similar)



Grade: Simple Monastery



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST & DINNER

DAY 6 - Final ride down to the Mediterranean Sea. Discover 9,000 year old seaside town of Byblos

After breakfast we bid farewell to the Qadisha Valley as we start our ride to the coast. The start of the route involves a few hundred metres of very steep ascent and some may prefer to travel in the support vehicle to avoid this section. The route then follows slightly busier roads in good condition as we descend and rapidly leave the mountains behind us, entering a drier landscape of bush and scrub and a hotter, drier climate. The small back roads become slightly quieter and with more broken surfaces as we approach the coast. We end our final ride in the seaside town of Batroun where we plan to have lunch, visit the souk and see the Phoenician sea wall. You may like to try a glass of the refreshing local iced-lemonade.

Later this afternoon we drive the short distance to Byblos and we plan to visit the citadel 12th century Crusader castle on arrival, to explore this archaeological site and take in panoramic views over the ruins and surrounding coastline from the top of the castle's keep. The castle is the main attraction here but there is evidence of continual occupation of this site as far back as the Bronze Age. We spend the night here in Byblos, thought to be one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world. You may be tempted to have a dip in the Med from Byblos\ inviting beaches.

Our total cycling distance today is approximately 47 kilometres (670 metres total accumulated ascent and 1580 m descent).



ACCOMMODATION:
Ahiram Hotel (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 7 - Visit dramatic limestone formations at Jeitta Caves. Return to Beirut for city tour

We start our drive back to Beirut this morning after breakfast. Our first stop is in the hills of Harissa where we have the chance to climb the statue of Our Lady of Lebanon for fine coastal views. We make our next stop shortly afterwards at the impressive Jeitta Caves, where we plan to visit the upper cave on foot and lower cave by boat. Afterwards we drive for about 45 minutes to downtown Beirut where we start a city tour in the afternoon. Travelling by bus and on foot we plan to take in the major sites, starting in the National Museum where we can see well-preserved treasures from Lebanon's different periods of history. Following the Green Line, the dividing line of Beirut during the civil war, we will visit Martyrs Square and Mohammad Al Amin Mosque. Much of the city has been rebuilt since the war ended but there are plenty of reminders, including the bullet-ridden Holiday Inn that have been left as a reminder of these dark days. Finally we plan to walk part of the Corniche, taking in the cityscape, and start to understand

how the city was divided and how the regeneration projects have created modern-day Beirut.

No cycling today.



ACCOMMODATION:

Le Commodore Hotel (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 8 - Trip ends in Beirut

The trip ends after breakfast at our hotel in Beirut.

There are no activities planned today, so you are free to depart at any time. If your flight is departing later in the day, luggage storage facilities are available at our hotel. If you would like to receive a complimentary airport transfer today, you'll need to depart from Beirut-Rafic Hariri International Airport (BEY), which is around 20 minutes from the centre.



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

Trip information

Climate and country information

Lebanon

Climate

Lebanon has a Mediterranean climate. The summers are hot and humid, mild weather in spring and autumn; winter can be cold with some snow and can drop to sub zero from December to March.

Time difference to GMT	Plugs	Religion	Language
+2	3 Pin Flat	Islam, Christian	Arabic, French

Budgeting and packing

Clothing

When cycling: quick drying cycle tops, padded cycle shorts, lightweight wind and water proof jacket and warmer breathable layers where local conditions require. Weather is changeable in the mountains; it can be cold especially at night and in spring and autumn months when we advise to bring a warmer jacket. Raingear is essential at all times. Temperatures go up considerably, especially on the coastal strip, in summer months.

General: Pack essentially for mild or hot weather depending on the time of the year.

Footwear

If you are not bringing cycle shoes then try to bring stiff-soled shoes as these are better for cycling - transmitting your energy into the pedals more efficiently. This becomes more relevant and recommended the more demanding the grade and distances to cover. SPD cycle shoes are not well suited to trips that combine sightseeing with cycling.

Comfortable shoes, trainers, sandals or flip flops are useful when not on the bike.

Luggage

20kg

Luggage: On tour

We recommend you bring a daypack and one main piece of luggage (total allowance: 44lb/20kg) which will be transported between hotels while you cycle. Check the bike details section to see if a pannier or handlebar bag is provided on the bike. Hotel porters are not always available, so don't overload yourself.

Equipment

On all Explore cycle holidays we strongly recommend you bring along and wear your cycle helmet. In case of an accident resulting in personal injury, certain insurance policies are invalidated in cases where a helmet was not being worn. Cycle glasses to protect against dust, pollen and the sun, padded cycle gloves and a water bottle or water delivery system (e.g. camelback or platypus) are also useful. You may choose to bring your own gel seat cover for added comfort. If a handle bar bag or pannier is not provided (check bike details) then you may like to bring a small rucksack to wear while cycling. Other items to consider bringing are a sunhat and sun cream, torch, earplugs and insect repellent. Please carry some or all of your cycling equipment e.g. helmet as part of your hand luggage.

Tipping

Explore leader

Tipping isn't compulsory, and we work hard to ensure that our leaders all receive a fair wage. However, you might want to recognise a leader that's done a great job or really added to your trip by giving them a tip. We're often asked about the recommended amount. It's a tricky one, and down to personal preference, but we'd recommend US\$3.00 per person per day (US\$21 per person per week) as a guideline.

Local crew

Although entirely voluntary, tipping is a recognized part of life in this region of the world. Some local staff will look to members of the group for personal recognition of particular services provided. In order to make things easier for you, your leader may organise a group's tips kitty for included activities and meals and if this is the case, they will account for it throughout the tour.

Accordingly, you should allow 45 USD per person for group tipping (5USD is for optional group drinking water throughout the trip, please ensure you bring a personal water bottle to decant water into).

Lebanon

Food and drink

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

Lunch price	Dinner price	Beer price	Water price
£6 - 10	£15-18	£2.5 - 4	£0.8

Foreign Exchange

Local currency

Lebanese Pound and US\$ is accepted throughout. Please note you will probably receive Lebanese Pounds in change when using US Dollars.

Recommended Currency For Exchange

UK Sterling is widely accepted though exchange rates. We recommend carrying all your money in cash as Travellers Cheques are increasingly difficult to cash. See also note below.

Where To Exchange

In major towns and the airport.

ATM Availability

ATMs are available.

Credit Card Acceptance

Widely acceptable in cities and hotels.

Travellers Cheques

Travellers Cheques although still the safest way of carrying money are difficult to cash in Lebanon and thus we recommend against taking them. There are high commission charges on travellers cheques on a per cheque basis so, if using, we suggest you take high denomination cheques. Proof of purchase may be necessary for encashment of Travellers Cheques.

Transport, Accommodation & Meals

Transport Information

Bus, Bicycle

Accommodation notes

Lebanon's tourism infrastructure is well developed but standards can vary across the country.

In Beirut and Byblos we stay in well-located, comfortable properties. Rooms are clean and offer en suite facilities.

While in Baalbek we stay in an old but charming hotel from another era that has kept its doors open every day since it opened in 1874, including through two world wars and the country's civil war. The hotel has been visited through the ages by kings, queens, and heads of state, occupied by the Ottomans, the British and has hosted celebrities including Ella Fitzgerald. Located across the road from the site of Baalbek the hotel offers a prime location with a touch of faded glamour. The hotel's age and antiquity does mean there is no lift, no mod cons, hot water can be unreliable and there is no air conditioning. Rooms are twin and with en suite facilities.

Near Mayrouba, we sleep in a comfortable guesthouse within the grounds of Saydet Al Nour Convent for the Sisters of Nazareth. The simply-furnished rooms are twin or triple share and all have en suite facilities.

In the Qadisha Valley, we sleep a comfortable guesthouse within the grounds of St Anthony's Monastery. The simply-furnished rooms are in a new block, twin or triple share and all have en suite facilities.

Essential Information

Government Travel Safety Advice

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination: safety and security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs. For UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office advice [click here](#).

For more information from Explore about travel advice, [click here](#)

Under 18 immigration guidance

Please note that some countries require proof of parental consent when travelling overseas with under 18s. Please check requirements with the relevant embassy or consular office well in advance of travel if this applies to your party.

Price Guarantee

Once your booking has been confirmed we guarantee the price will not increase, whatever the circumstances. Before booking please ensure you have read our important tour pricing information. [Booking Conditions](#)

Visa and Passport Information

Lebanon: British, Australian, New Zealand, Canadian and America passport holders can apply for a single entry visa on arrival valid for one month (foc).

Please note British Overseas citizens and British Protected Person will need to obtain a visa prior to travelling. Persons with Palestinian heritage should check with the Lebanon embassy if they need to obtain a visa prior to travelling.

All passports must have a minimum of 6 months validity from the date of entry into Lebanon. Please note that any passport that contains an endorsement or a visa for Israel or stamps from other countries' border crossing points with Israel, regardless of whether it has expired, will not be accepted for visa on arrival or by the Lebanese embassy.

All visitor's names will be checked upon arrival against a database for individuals wanted for/convicted of offences in Lebanon. If you are concerned you have a common name please travel with a copy of your birth certificate that includes your parents names to permit additional checks. Where names are matched against the database, the individual may be detained.

Please be aware that entry may also be refused to some countries if your passport bears stamps or visas (valid or expired) from certain countries. Please bear this in mind when booking/traveling to certain destinations as it can negatively affect your future travel plans.

If you do require assistance in obtaining a visa then you may be able to apply through Explore's recommended visa service in the UK, Travcour. See www.travcour.com to download the relevant visa application for your trip, if applicable (UK citizens only), along with details of how to apply for your visa through Travcour. The Team at Travcour will be happy to answer specific questions relating to visa applications, please call them directly on 0208 5431846.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you are in possession of a full passport, with the correct validity for your chosen destination.

Booking conditions

Before booking your Explore trip, please ensure that you read both our Essential Information and Booking Conditions.

Transfers

Find out more about [Trip Transfer Terms and Conditions](#) before you book.

Booking a land only package with Explore

Customers who have chosen to book on the 'Land Only' arrangements of our tour, please ensure that you have checked your tour specific 'Joining Instructions' prior to booking your own travel arrangements. Your joining instructions can be found below in the dates and prices information.

You may also be eligible for the Free Explore Transfer.

Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and

depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The complimentary transfers will be arranged from the Explore designated airport or train station to your trips joining point, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. Generally the airport or station that Explore have selected will be the one that is closest to the town or city where the trip starts, or the one nearest to the joining point. It will be either an airport or train station but not both.

The exception to this rule is customers who are booked on a tour where the joining and ending point is at the designated airport or train station.

Free transfers are not available for Self-Guided, Polar, Tailormade or Tours for Churches customers.

If you are not eligible for the Free Transfer then you will need to make your own way through to the joining and ending point. On a majority of our tours Explore will be able to provide a private transfer at an additional cost. Please ask for a quote at the time of booking.

For more information regarding the Explore Free Transfer [click here](#)

Insurance

It is a condition of booking with Explore that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country. Please ensure your policy includes medical emergency helicopter evacuation in the event of illness or injury and covers the entire duration of your holiday. If you are trekking at altitude please ensure that there is no upper altitude limit which may limit or exclude cover for your trip. The cost of many of our Polar Voyages will exceed the capped amount covered by standard insurance premiums and you will be required to pay an additional premium to cover the full value of your trip. Please ensure that you are covered for the full amount of your holiday cost, as insufficient cover could invalidate a claim under the policy. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling on trips within the United Kingdom.

Read more information about what travel insurance is required.

Flight information

Explore offers a wide range of flexible flying options to make joining and leaving our trips easy. Read more about them [here](#).

Flight Information

You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

Booking a flight inclusive package with Explore

We have a good selection of flights not only from London but from many regional airports around the UK allowing us to compare fares between scheduled carriers as well as low cost and charter airlines. Our dedicated flights team will match the best flight options to your arrival and departure airport.

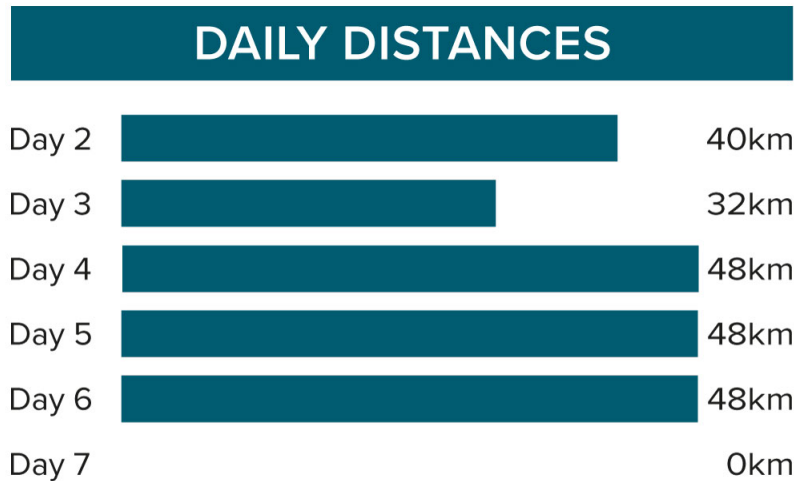
On our website we display a UK flight inclusive package guide price which is generally based on a London departure. To avoid paying supplements or to secure your preferred flight option, we recommend booking as early as possible, especially for peak travel dates.

Lebanon

Vaccinations

Nothing compulsory, but we recommend protection against malaria, typhoid, tetanus infectious hepatitis and polio. Consult your travel clinic for latest advice on different prophylaxis available against malaria. Please check the latest requirements with your travel clinic or doctor prior to departure. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at Explore Travel Health and from your local healthcare provider. Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed by you before travelling.

Cycling information



CLL_Chart

General cycling information

On this tour we cycle 201 km over five days (an average of 40 km a day). The terrain is often in hilly or mountainous terrain with undulations, some short and steep ascents every day and a couple of long descents. We ride mainly on tarmac and road conditions are varied with pot holes and a broken surface on some sections especially on days 4 and 5. Most routes are quiet with occasional traffic, becoming busier around urban areas. A support vehicle accompanies the rides throughout the tour. We have graded the route as moderate to challenging.

Bike included

21 gear Trek mountain bike with front suspension

Bike information

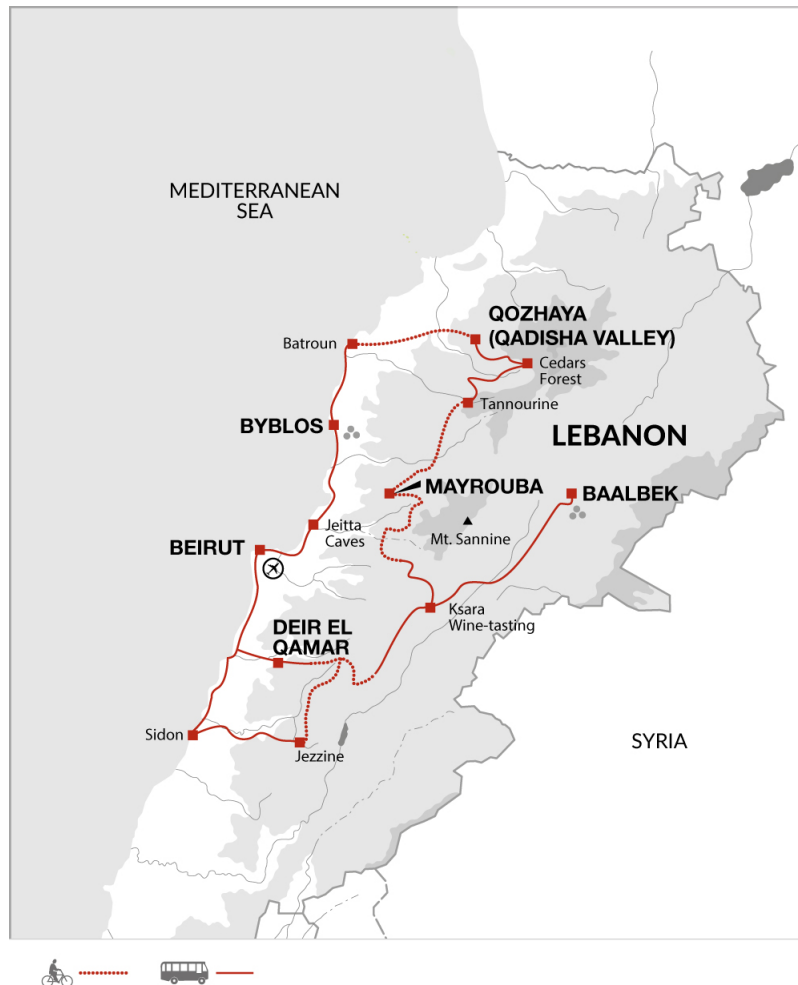
Your included bike is a 21 gear Trek mountain bike with front suspension and will be the correct frame size for your height. There is the facility to fit your own pedals or saddle if you wish to bring them.

A support vehicle accompanies the rides throughout the tour. We provide spare parts and take care of the day to day maintenance. All you need to bring is your own helmet.

Cycling grade

ModerateToChallenging

Additional Information



CLL_Map

Why book this trip

Unlike many other operators, we include the hire of your bike in the overall cost of the holiday: you don't need to bring your own or pay extra to hire one locally. We also provide a support vehicle, spare parts and take care of day to day bike maintenance. All you need bring is your own helmet.

Reviews



**AWARD WINNING
EXPLORE LEADERS**



**PRICE GUARANTEE
PROMISE**



**AIRPORT
TRANSFERS**