

EXPLORE!

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BEST SELLER

Highlights of Lebanon

LEBANON - TRIP CODE LL

DISCOVERY

Why book this trip?

Uncover Lebanon's fascinating history on this one week holiday. Stand in front of the vast Roman ruins at Baalbek, discover Crusader castles and Phoenician ruins and see the reminders of the civil war on a walking tour in Beirut.

- **Cedars of God** - See the 1000-year-old Lebanon Cedars set high above the Qadisha Valley
- **Coastal Cities** - Uncover the rich heritage and maritime histories of Byblos and Batroun on the Mediterranean coast
- **Lebanese cuisine** - Taste red wine in the Bekaa Valley and feast on fresh hummus, labneh and falafel in the narrow streets of the souks



INCLUDED MEALS
 Breakfast: 7
 Lunch: 1
 Dinner: 2



TRIP STAFF
 Explore Tour
 Leader
 Driver(s)
 Local Guide(s)



TRANSPORT
 Bus



ACCOMMODATION
 6 nights
 comfortable hotel
 1 nights simple
 monastery



TRIP PACE:
 Moderate



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

Arrive in Beirut, Lebanon's historic capital city. Broken down into many different districts on the edge of the Mediterranean Sea, Beirut is a city of contrasts and home to a diversity of ethnicities, languages, religions and cultures.

For those arriving on time our Leader plans to welcome you in the hotel reception at 7pm and offer information on where to go out for dinner. There are no other activities planned today, so you are free to arrive in Beirut at any time. 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 30 minutes from the airport depending on traffic. Due to flights arriving throughout the evening on day one, the official welcome meeting will take place after breakfast on day two.

If your flight arrives earlier in the day, perhaps you might choose to take a walk along the sea front or go in search of freshly-cooked falafel to get a taste for the Middle East.



ACCOMMODATION:
 Le Commodore Hotel (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: NONE

DAY 2 - Stand on Beirut's Green Line, discover Roman ruins and stroll along the Corniche

After breakfast we'll make our way to the National Museum, starting here we can begin to understand the civilisations that have shaped Lebanon. The museum is located at the end of the Green Line, this line divided the city during the civil war and for those 15 years the museum was closed, its facade suffering serious damage throughout the conflict. Thousands of artefacts are on display including sarcophagi from the Phoenician period to ornate mosaics from the Roman city of Baalbek.

Moving further down the Green Line we'll visit Martyrs Square and the Mohammad Al Amin Mosque. The mosque resembles the Blue Mosque in Istanbul and its minarets stand at 65 metres tall making it a very useful navigation tool!

Much of the city has been rebuilt since the war ended but there are plenty of reminders of the 15 year civil war that Lebanon lived through, we'll pass the bullet-ridden Holiday Inn which still stands, with talks of demolishing the building or preserving it still taking place.

Walking along the Corniche is a must when in Beirut, and we'll join locals drinking strong, sweet coffees as we go. With the sea to one side you can take stop, take in the city landscape and start to understand how the city was divided during the war and how the regeneration projects have created modern-day Beirut.

Our hotel is based in the Hamra neighbourhood and was used as a base for worldwide journalists covering the war. Before dinner tonight we'll take a drink in the bar and understand a little more about what life was like in Beirut between 1975 and 1990.



ACCOMMODATION:

Le Commodore Hotel (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE





MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 3 - Visit Sidon's Phoenician sea castle and narrow souks before driving in to the Chouf Mountains

This morning we'll leave the city and drive south to Sidon. Once an important trade port on the Phoenician sea route, Sidon is now a busy seaside city, where remnants of its ancient past can be found at every turn. We'll start at Qalaa al-Bahr, a defence sea castle built in 1228 by the crusaders. The castle is a great display of how each civilisation built on the previous one, with Roman ruins used by the Crusaders to add support to the walls, then the Ottomans arriving and building a mosque on the west wall of the castle.

We'll explore the souk and the renovated khans, including Khan al-Franj which dates back to the 17th century and once operated as an 'inn for foreigners', offering lodgings for many the merchants and traders that travelled through on the way to Mediterranean.

There are many good spots to eat in Sidon and we'll have lunch here by the coast before moving inland to the Chouf area of Lebanon. Our base for tonight is the sleepy village of Deir Al-Qamar, set on a hilltop looking down towards the coast it is a great place to relax watch the sunset.



ACCOMMODATION:

Deir al Oumara Hotel (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 4 - Discover Beiteddine Palace and experience a traditional Lebanese lunch. Travel to Baalbek

We'll have a relaxed breakfast today before checking out and taking a short drive to the 18th century Beiteddine Palace complex. Beiteddine translates to 'House of Faith' and the palace is built on the remains of a Druze hermitage. The design is an intricate mix of Italian Baroque architecture and Arabian styles which perfectly symbolised the power and wealth of its creators.

Crossing over the Chouf Mountains we'll descend in to the fertile Bekaa Valley where many villagers mostly work in agriculture and there is a community aim to use less intensive, more environmentally friendly methods of farming. In the winter season there is often snow fall in the valley and surrounding mountains, so depending on winter road closures, we'll either be having lunch at an eco-tourism project called Tawlet Ammiq or at Chateau Khoury vineyard. Tawlet Ammiq celebrates traditional Lebanese

cuisine using the freshest ingredients cooked by local staff who use their family recipes. Chateau Khoury is a family-run business set on the foothills of Mount Lebanon and has panoramic views over the Bekaa Valley.

Depending on timings, there may be an additional opportunity this afternoon to stop at a small winery to sample the range of red wines produced.

At the end of the day we'll drive to the town of Baalbek, known as the 'City of the Sun'. Staying close to the ruins we'll be able to get a sense of the incredible Roman site that we will discover tomorrow.



ACCOMMODATION:
Palmyra Hotel (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST & LUNCH

DAY 5 - Explore the vast Roman ruins at Baalbek and travel to Byblos

Today, we will see the jewel in Lebanon's ancient crown; Baalbek.

After breakfast we'll walk through the town to one of the world's finest remaining examples of Roman architecture. The details of Baalbek's true origins and history are a highly emotive topic among historians and archaeologists but it's widely agreed that the site dates back some 5,000 years. The site is a dedication to the gods of Jupiter, Venus and Mercury, and was classed a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1984. Entering through the forecourt into the remains of the Hexagonal court you can begin to imagine the city at its peak. The Temple of Bacchus is without doubt the highlight of the site with its ornately decorated stonework, niches and columns surrounding an ancient theatre.

We'll spend plenty of time exploring the site and in the afternoon we leave Baalbek and make our way back to the coastline and the city of Byblos. Another ancient port city rich in history and home to some of the earliest known inscriptions using the Phoenician alphabet. We'll take a short walk to the 12th century Crusader castle 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 are ruins in various stages of decay dating as far back as the Bronze Age, and the site is an excellent example of the many reigns of power that have ruled this area over the millennium.

The rest of the day will be free to shop in the old Ottoman souks, choose a quiet spot for a strong coffee, or alternatively head down to the fisherman's' harbour to watch the sunset over the Mediterranean. There are many choices for an evening meal but the seaside location means a great selection of fresh fish options.





ACCOMMODATION:

Ahram Hotel (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST & DINNER

DAY 6 - Free morning in Byblos then drive to St Anthony's Monastery in the Qadisha Valley

We have a relaxed start to the morning with free time to watch the fishing boats in Byblos harbour, pick up some souvenirs in the souks or just grab a coffee and take in the views.

In the afternoon we'll drive up in to the mountains, to the fertile terraces of the Qadisha Valley. We'll stop to see the Cedars of Lebanon Forest, and weather permitting we will walk for one hour among cedars that are over 100 years old.

Due to forest regulations we cannot guarantee that the forest will be open for walking. After an unusually long winter in 2019 the authorities have confirmed that it will remain closed until mid-June to ensure the new cedar seeds have had time to settle after the snow melts.

After seeing the cedars we will make our way to St Anthony's monastery. 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.



ACCOMMODATION:

St Antoine Monastery (or similar)



Grade: Simple Monastery



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 7 - Join the early morning prayers, discover dramatic limestone formations at Jeitta Caves and return to Beirut

We'll wake early this morning to the sound of the monastery bells ringing and there will be an

opportunity to attend the monks' morning prayers inside the church. The Catholic service is spoken in Arabic and everyone is welcome to attend. After the service, there will time for breakfast before a 90 minute hike in the valley. The gentle walk follows dirt paths, surrounded by fruit trees and the route offers spectacular views through the valley and is a great chance to look back at the monastery which is built into the cliff face.

Around mid-morning we will leave the monastery and the Qadisha Valley behind, travelling back towards the Mediterranean coast to Batroun. One of the world's oldest settlements dating back over 5,000 years, Batroun has played an important role in different phases of ancient civilisation but is now a relaxed coastal city. Together with our leader, we will walk around the ancient sea wall, the fort and the old souk before free time for lunch. For a refreshing break, be sure to try a glass of the Batrounian lemonade - it is said that people come from near and far to try it and the locals fiercely debate who makes the best!

We will then start our journey back to Beirut. On the way we'll make a stop at Jeitta Caves. The caves were discovered by chance by an American missionary, out on a hunting expedition he fired his gun towards the sound of running water and investigated more on hearing the echoes! The upper section of the cave has a 750 metre pathway allowing you to walk beneath giant stalactites and look down on the river water and stalagmites below. The entrance to the caves is a little touristy with a toy train and gift shops but once on in the caves photography is banned and noise is kept to a minimum giving you the chance to fully appreciate this impressive feat of nature - where it takes at least 100 years for 1cm of new rock to form.

Returning to Beirut we'll celebrate the last night of the trip with a traditional mezze dinner. In Lebanon food is such a key part of family life and is an experience to be enjoyed rather than a necessity; tables are covered generously with small mezze dishes that are shared and accompanied with home-grown wine. There is something for everyone and particular favourites include fresh tabbouleh salad, grilled meats and smoky baba ghanoush.



ACCOMMODATION:
Le Commodore Hotel (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST & DINNER

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 from Beirut 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 need to depart from Beirut-Rafic Hariri International Airport (BEY), which is around 30 minutes from the hotel depending on traffic.



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

May to mid-June is spring time and October to November is autumn time - layers and/or a sweater are suggested especially for the cooler evenings and a waterproof jacket.

November can have heavy rains which can feel colder, an umbrella and warm sleepwear for nights 4 & 6 would be useful.

June to September is Lebanon's summer time - lightweight clothing and layers are best, and a hat for sun protection is essential. Remember swimwear!

It can still be cooler at altitude, especially in the early mornings and evenings, so a sweater and light jacket are advisable for the Qadisha Valley.

December to April is Lebanon's winter time - Down by the coast it remains relatively mild, so we recommend layers and a waterproof jacket. At this time, snow is common throughout the Qadisha Valley, so please bring suitable warm clothing including warm sleepwear for nights 4 & 6.

Women are advised not to wear shorts or dresses that are too revealing as this can be disrespectful and

attract unwelcome attention in the souk and old town areas - loose fitting trousers or slacks are ideal.

Footwear

Comfortable walking shoes/boots are recommended for the valley and ancient sites, while trainers and sandals may be preferred for the towns.

Luggage

20kg

Luggage: On tour

One main piece of baggage and a day sack. Hotel porters are not always available, so don't overload yourself.

Equipment

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 and if this is the case, they will account for it throughout the tour.

Accordingly, you should allow US\$ 35.00 per person for group tipping.

For all non-included services and meals on your trip please tip independently at your discretion.

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

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.

In the Chouf mountains we stay in an historic building originally built as a palace in 1827. The property is built from ancient stones in a traditional Ottoman style and features a courtyard with sweeping views of the surrounding mountains. Rooms all have en suites.

While in Baalbek we stay in an old but charming hotel that is rich in history and 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 by kings, queens, and heads of state, plus occupied by the Ottomans and the British and has hosted celebrities including Ella Fitzgerald. The hotel sits across the road from the site of Baalbek offering a prime location with a touch of faded glamour. The hotel's age and antiquity does mean hot water can be unreliable and there is no air conditioning. Rooms are twin and en suite.

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

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.

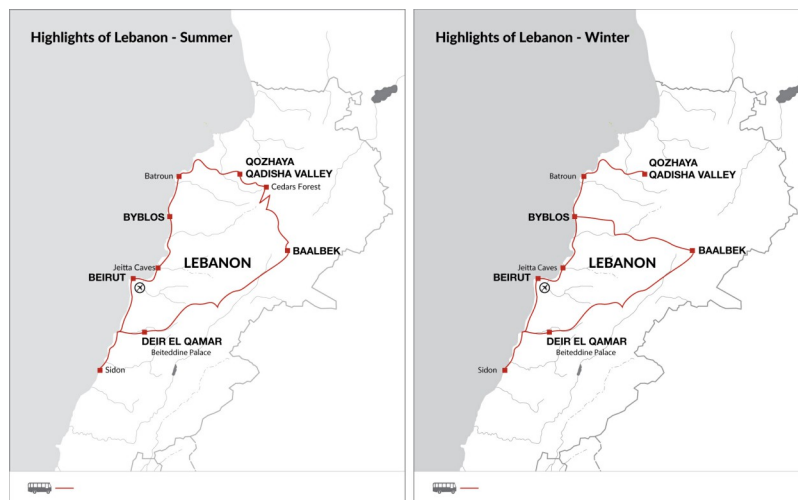
On our website we display a UK flight inclusive package guide price which is generally based on a London departure. To avoid paying supplements or to secure your preferred flight option, we recommend booking as early as possible, especially for peak travel dates.

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.

Additional Information



Summer and winter itineraries

Reviews



**AWARD WINNING
EXPLORE LEADERS**



**PRICE GUARANTEE
PROMISE**



**AIRPORT
TRANSFERS**