

# TLB

DESTINATIONS

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## COUNTRY PROFILE



Lebanon is a diverse country with so much variety on offer : cultural, adventure, history . And it boasts one of the best climates on earth.

Explore ancient sites

Experience the renowned Lebanese hospitality

Delve in the excitement of modern Beirut and Mediterranean beaches.

TLB invites you to Take Life Beyond



## Country Profile

### Why choose Lebanon?

- \* Close to Europe - around 4 hrs flight
- \* Diverse natural, historical, and cultural features
- \* Good mix of tradition and modernity
- \* Excellent gastronomic and wine traditions
- \* Hospitable friendly people
- \* Pleasant all-year round climate

### Lebanon in brief

**Borders:** on the Mediterranean Sea, between Israel and Syria

**Government :** Lebanese Republic

**Total Size:** 10,400 sq km

**Population:** 3,971,941 (July 2008 est.)

**Capital:** Beirut

**Languages:** Arabic (official), French, English, Armenian

**Time:** G.M.T. + 2 hours / April – October : G.M.T. + 3 hours

**Climate:** Mediterranean climate ; mild to cool, wet winters with hot, dry summers; Lebanon mountains experience heavy winter snows

Lightweights are essential in summer with protective headwear. Heavy winter clothing is advisable from November to March.

**Terrain:** narrow coastal plain; no desert; the Bekaa Valley separates Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon Mountains

**Electricity:** 220 volts AC, 50Hz. European-style two-pin plugs.

**Visa and passport requirements:** Group visa can be pre-arranged by TLB. Individual visa to be applied for in home country. Passport valid for at least six months required by all nationals.

**National Holidays:** There are several public holidays observed every year, as well as a balance of Christian and Muslim celebrations. The holidays of the Islamic calendar are observed depending on the lunar calendar.

**Cultural considerations:** In rural regions and some areas of Beirut conservative wear is advisable. Otherwise dress code liberal.

**Currency** The local currency is the Lebanese pound (LBP)

**Credit Cards:** Credit cards are accepted most places.

**Telecommunication:** Mobiles can be used in most Lebanon. Internet widely is available.

**Health and medical:** In Lebanon always drink bottled water. Health insurance is recommended as well as the appropriate vaccinations. Excellent medical facilities exist in Beirut.

### LEBANON's main attractions

Lebanon's diverse mix of Mediterranean coast, rugged peaks and green, fertile valleys is all packed into 225km from North to South. The capital **Beirut** is a mix of modernity and traditional : the Achrafieh quarter features Ottoman heritage houses ; the Downtown area has been restored and is a vibrant place in the evening to stroll around as is the Corniche seafont promenade boasting beaches, and restaurants, and the most famous natural feature of Pigeon Rock -

a popular spot to meet people and watch the sun setting over the Mediterranean.

The Beirut National Museum provides a glimpse into antiquity and is constantly updating its remarkable collection.

**Tripoli** is Lebanon's second largest city and monuments include the whole range of religious, civil, and military architecture such as mosques, madrassah, khans, and the Saint-Gilles Citadel, a Crusader castle. Secular buildings include the hammam, bathing-house in the classical pattern of Roman- Byzantine baths, and the Khan. The souks feature various trades where tailors, jewelers, perfumeries, tanners and soap-makers work in surroundings that have barely changed over the years. From Tripoli's ancient port one can hop on a boat to spot the green turtles and rare birds on the **Palm Island** a UNESCO listed nature reserve. While in the north one should head to the mountains, passing expansive olive terraces and fruit orchards, to reach the **Qadisha Valley UNESCO World Heritage Site** featuring ancient monasteries and churches, including a chapel built into the rock face.

**Byblos**, reputed to be the oldest town in the world features excavations which have unearthed artifacts dating back to Neolithic times as well as from Canaanite, Phoenician, Hellenistic, Roman and Crusader periods. In the Crusader castle one can discover the obelisks' temple, a royal necropolis and some sarcophagus; the old town holds around the port with cobbled alleys and there are several fish restaurants and one can take a boat ride with a local fisherman out into the Mediterranean. Heading south, a sea castle built of stone from Roman remains can be seen in **Sidon**, a port town on the coast 48 km from Beirut . It was one of the most outstanding of the Phoenician City states around the 12th century BC and reached its zenith during the Persian Empire (550-330 BC). It is also renowned for it's soap production and the old town houses one of the world's only soap museums.

Heading further south one reaches **Tyre** which houses an impressive Roman amphitheatre and one can view the ancient baths used for the extraction of the purple dye in ancient times. A short drive up in the hills is the biblical site of **Qana**, today more renowned for the attack during the 2006 war. Further inland the town of **Aanjar** in the Bekaa Valley contains an Umayyad site from the 8th century - a unique historical example of a commercial centre. Also located in the fertile Bekaa Valley, the city of **Baalbeck** was in Phoenician times a place of worship to Baal, the Phoenician Sun God. One of the best-preserved temple areas of the Roman world is to be found here. Some fine wines are produced in the Bekaa Valley and one can enjoy a wine tasting session by experts at one of the many **Bekaa valley vineyards**.

The Lebanese cuisine has a reputation as one of the best in the world; the town of **Zahle** features numerous restaurants along a flowing river and time is taken to enjoy the mezza , hors-d'oeuvres, before pursuing with main course—and of course dessert.