

HIKING THE HOLY VALLEYS

TOUR DETAILS		Duration
		6 days
HIGHLIGHTS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stay in an 18th Century monastery • Visit a living hermitage • See the dramatic Baatara sinkhole • Experience Lebanese hospitality in a homestay • Explore the remarkable Jeita's Grotto • Delicious Lebanese food - treat yourself! 		
Off The Beaten Track Rating	● ● ● ● ●	Activity Rating ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

ITINERARY

DAY 1 Arrival into Beirut airport where you will be met by a Travel The Unknown representative. Transfer to hotel in Beirut's popular Hamra quarter. Overnight in Beirut. Meal plan: N/A.

DAY 2 Breakfast at hotel. Check-out at 8:00am and transfer to the Kesrouan area, 50km North-East of Beirut. The area is most famous for the spectacular **Jeita's grotto**. Spend some time exploring these incredible caves with one of the world's most impressive collection of **stalagmites and stalactites**. After exploring the caves the hike starts. The itinerary crosses the wooded **Jabal Moussa Reserve** to an isolated hamlet on its northern flank. "Jabal Moussa" or "Moses' mountain" is home of many trees such as iron oaks, elms and junipers. The fauna is rich as well; porcupines, foxes, jackals, wolves, hyenas are all present but are rarely seen in daylight. The ruins of stone houses bear witness to the once flourishing silk industry. Hiking profile 1400-1600-800m. Cumulative uphill: 500m. Overnight with a local family in a unique setting overlooking the Nahr Brahim valley and Adonis river. Meal plan: B, L, D

DAY 3 The route continues along the **Adonis river's** southern flank before it crosses a natural bridge of great beauty to the right bank and into the Jbayl district. Here you will find what is known as the "**smoking hole**" because of a curious phenomenon. The whole river disappears underground for 70m before it surges up again forming a high column of water vapour. Depending on weather conditions, the column can reach over 100m in height. Seen from afar, it looks like a forest fire. Here one recalls the seasonal rebirth of Adonis, killed by a jealous god at the river's bank. Passing a Phoenician altar, the trail starts a long ascent through wild pines and apple orchards. Finally arrive into the Laqlouq ski resort for an overnight. 800- 550-1500m. Uphill 1000m. Meal plan: B, L, D

DAY 4 After breakfast the itinerary starts uphill to the curious rock dwellings of a past dissident bishop, before descending gently to an organic farm and the **brehtaking "3 bridges" Baatara sinkhole**, an impressive natural phenomenon that has drawn rock climbers and speleologists from all over the world. The route continues through a deep gorge to **Tannourine** and the serene setting of the **Houb** monastery for an overnight. 1500-1200-1700-1500-1600m. Uphill 800m. Meal plan: B, L, D

DAY 5 The itinerary crosses the Reserve of Tannourine and the stunning cedar forest of Hadath. Continue along a steep but beautiful path to the Qannoubine hamlet in the heart of the UNESCO-listed **Qadisha valley**. Qadisha ("saint" in Syriac) Valley has since medieval times been the abode of numerous monks and hermits that have chosen the shelter of its high cliffs and grottoes as an ideal place for prayer and contemplation. In the valley visit the Qannoubine monastery, residence of 17 Maronite patriarchs since 1440, now the summer residence of nuns. Stop at the 13th Century Haouqa Seminar, now occupied by a Colombian hermit. The trek ends at the end of the valley. 8:30-16:30 Trekking. 1600-1700-1500-1700-550m. Uphill 500m. Transfer to Beirut, 100km from Torza. Overnight in Beirut (Hamra).

***Hamra** ("red" in Arabic) owes its name to the ochre dunes that once covered this sparsely inhabited area. Things changed in 1866 with the founding of the American missionary "Syrian Protestant College", later to become the famous AUB (American University of Beirut) and its no-less-renowned AUH hospital. With the civil war, the area lost some of its glamour but remains a most interesting place to stay in. Meal plan: B, L*

DAY 6 Breakfast at hotel and transfer to airport for return flight. Meal plan: B



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PRICE INCLUDES

Airport pick-up & drop-off

Overnights in a monastery, with a local family and in lodges

Entrance fees to sites

Most meals (refer to itinerary for meal plan)

Drivers and guides

Climate Care contribution

Bottled water (3 litres per person per day)

ABOUT OUR TRIPS

In addition to our scheduled group departures, **private and tailor-made trips** can be arranged that include some or all of the places on this itinerary. Please contact us with your requirements (e: info@traveltheunknown.com, t: 0845 053 0352) and we will happily put together an itinerary for you and your group. No trip is too long or too short.