



HIKING THE HOLY VALLEYS
- TRIP NOTES -

HIKING THE HOLY VALLEYS (6 DAYS)

**Kesrouane - Laqlouq -
Tannourine - Qadisha
Valley**



WELCOME

Thank you for booking your holiday with *Travel The Unknown*. We love travel and we are confident that you will go away with fantastic memories of our *Hiking the Holy Valley* tour.

HIGHLIGHTS

- 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!

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- Airport transfers
- Ground transport
- Accommodation in monastery and lodges
- Entrance fees to sites & parks
- Most meals (5 breakfasts, 4 lunches and 4 dinners)
- Bottled water (3 litres per person per day)
- Drivers and local guides
- Climate Care contribution

Itinerary

Please download the detailed itinerary for your tour from our website. We have made it simpler to navigate and there is now one-click access to each tour via the Trip Finder in the main menu, then click on the Itinerary tab to download your itinerary.

Itinerary Disclaimer

Itineraries are correct at the time of printing. Our itineraries are sometimes updated during the year to incorporate suggestions from past travellers and sometimes our own research too. Please ensure that you print and review a final copy of these **Trip Notes** and itinerary a couple of days prior to travel, in case there have been changes that may affect you.

Joining & Finishing Points

All travellers will be greeted at Beirut airport by a *Travel The Unknown* representative and will be escorted to their accommodation.

All customers will be escorted to the flight departing from Beirut airport. You can bolt on additional trips or services. Please contact us for more information.

Flights from London

We normally use the scheduled services of the airlines (depending on availability). As flight timings and schedules change regularly we recommend you call one of our specialist sales staff or your agent to confirm up-to-date timings. Please note timings may change at a later date and cannot be confirmed until approximately two weeks before departure.

UK Regional Flights

Travel The Unknown is committed to making joining our trips as easy as possible, wherever you may live in the UK. The Flight Inclusive price is based on a London departure, but we are happy to tailor this to your local or regional airport.

Accommodation

Either ourselves or our trusted ground handlers have personally vetted all accommodation.

<u>Location</u>	<u>Accommodation</u>
Beirut	2* Hotel
Kesrouane	Home stay with local family
Laqlouq	Lodge
Tannourine	Houb Monastery

If any of our preferred first choice accommodation is not available, we will organise something of a similar standard.

Style of Travel

Our trips combine culture, activity and relaxation. We try to give you the best of everything the region has to offer and you can opt in or out of any activities you please. These tours are for independent people and so we try to be flexible where we can, and give you time to explore on your own too.

Meals

Most meals are included in the price. Refer to the itinerary for details of the daily meal plan. You should budget about £20 (\$30) per day for additional meals.

Group Size

To minimise the footprint our tours leave - both on the environment and the local culture - we keep our group sizes limited to 12 people.

Tour Guides

We have gone to great length in trying to secure the best guides available. The group will be designated a fixed driver and escorting guide throughout the tour, and for the sightseeing aspects of the trip, we will sometimes use local guides.

Transport

Travel between destinations is by well maintained and comfortable cars and mini-buses.

Physical Demands

Please note that this is a reasonably demanding overland trip. The long days hiking means that this is not a trip for the armchair traveller.

A decent level of fitness and decent health is assumed. Accommodation is comfortable, however.

Optional Activities

From time to time other activities may be possible to arrange. Costs for such additional activities will not be covered in the standard tour package. Contact us in advance of your trip for more information.

Single Travellers

As experienced solo travellers, there were many times when we wanted to join tour groups, as it is a great way of meeting like-minded travellers, as well as getting to see some places that were otherwise not on our itineraries.

We try to keep our single supplements as low as possible. You will only have to pay a supplement if you want your own room. If you are open to sharing a room with another single same-sex traveller, then you pay no supplement.

Fellow Travellers

Travelling in a group is very rewarding and is a great way to meet new people. There may be large variations in age and nationality. This is most often a good thing, but can occasionally cause some teething problems, so we ask you to be patient with your fellow passengers and realise that everyone likes to travel a little differently. Please consider your fellow passengers too, and try to respect meeting times, especially for game drives.

PRACTICALITIES

Travel Insurance

Travel insurance is compulsory for all our trips. As a minimum we require that your insurance covers you for medical expenses including emergency repatriation. We also strongly recommend you are covered for personal liability and loss of luggage and personal effects. You will be required to give details of your insurance prior to departure. Please go to www.traveltheunknown.com/partners for links to excellent deals on travel insurance.

Visas

Visas are required by the majority of travellers to Lebanon. Check the following site for the latest visa information: lebanon.embassyhomepage.com or call the embassy in London (+ 44 (0) 20 7229 7265). Visas can be arranged by Travel The Unknown on request.

<p>NOTE: If you have travelled to Israel on your current passport please let us know even if you did not get a stamp as this could be a problem.</p>

Health

All *Travel The Unknown* travellers need to be in good physical health in order to participate fully in the group travel experience. If, in the opinion of our ground handler, any traveller is unable to complete the itinerary without undue risk to themselves and/or the rest of the group, *Travel The Unknown* reserves the right to exclude them from all or part of a trip without refund. Please read the itinerary for this tour thoroughly and then realistically self-assess your physical ability to complete the trip as described. Please consult with your doctor if you have any doubts or give us a call with any queries you may have.

An excellent resource for up-to-date travel medicine requirements is: www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk. We recommend that you also consult your doctor for up-to-date medical travel information before departure. You should also carry a first aid kit as well as any personal medical requirements. Please be aware that in some remoter areas you could be some distance from medical facilities. For legal reasons our leaders are prohibited from administering any type of drugs including headache tablets, antibiotics, etc.

NOTE: Do not leave it to the last minute to see you doctor as you may have to get immunised or start taking tablets some time prior to departure. You should see your doctor or visit a travel clinic at least 45 days before your departure.

When organising your own meals, be selective where you eat. Choose places that seem quite clean and where many locals eat. A high turnover usually means food is not left lying around and has been made fresh. We recommend that you stick to drinking bottled water, even when brushing your teeth.

At the time of writing the following vaccinations were recommended for travel to Lebanon but it is advisable to contact a doctor to get the latest available advice.

- Diphtheria, Hepatitis A, Tetanus, Typhoid, Polio.

Travellers should vigilantly protect themselves against mosquito bites by wearing longsleeved tops, long trousers and using a mosquito repellent with a high quantity of DEET. A mosquito net is also advisable for night time.

Safety

Many national governments provide a regularly updated advice service on safety issues involved with international travel. We recommend that you check your government's advice for their latest travel information before departure. For the UK, please visit: www.fco.gov.uk.

We strongly recommend that you use a neck wallet or money belt while travelling to ensure the safety of your documents and other valuables. It is not advisable to bring valuable jewellery when travelling. A lock is recommended for securing your luggage.

Your leader will accompany you on all included activities; however during your trip you will have some free time to pursue your own interests, relax and take it easy or explore at your leisure. Any optional activities you undertake are not part of your *Travel The Unknown* itinerary, and *Travel The Unknown* makes no guarantees about the safety of the activity or the standard of the operators running them. Please use your own good judgment. *Travel The Unknown* cannot be held responsible for any injuries or losses that may occur for any such optional activity. Please also note that *Travel The Unknown* retains the authority to amend or cancel any part of the trip itinerary if it is deemed necessary due to safety concerns.

Dangers

Despite many people's perceptions Lebanon is generally a very safe place to travel. However, you are still subject to the same problems that you find the world over – e.g. pickpockets can operate in busy places. Travelling with an experienced group leader will make your trip more protected from such external dangers but do not let your guard down completely. You are still responsible for your own belongings.

There is very rarely any trouble in the areas our tours cover. We closely monitor the safety situation on a continuous basis, using both government sources and our own network of contacts on the ground. Please check www.fco.gov.uk for the latest government advice on travel to the region. Please contact us at info@traveltheunknown.com if you have any further questions or concerns about safety issues.

Electricity

Electricity in Lebanon is 230 Volts, alternating at 50 cycles per second. If you travel to Lebanon with a device that does not accept 230 Volts at 50 Hertz, you will need a voltage converter.

There are three main types of voltage converter. Resistor-network converters will usually be advertised as supporting something like 50-1600 Watts. They are light-weight and support high-wattage electrical appliances like hair dryers and irons. However, they can only be used for short periods of time and are not ideal for digital devices.

Transformers will have a much lower maximum Watt rating, usually 50 or 100. Transformers can often be used continuously and provide better electricity for low wattage appliances like battery chargers, radios, laptop computers, cameras, mp3 players and camcorders. However, they are heavy because they contain large iron rods and lots of copper wire.

Some companies sell combination converters that include both a resistor network and a transformer in the same package. This kind of converter will usually come with a switch that switches between the two modes. If you absolutely need both types of converter, then this is the type to buy.

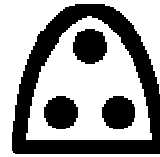
Outlets in Lebanon generally accept the following types of plug:



Flat blade plug



Two round pins



Three round pins arranged in a triangle



Two parallel flat pins with ground pin.

If your appliances plug has a different shape, you may need a plug adapter.

Depending on how much you plan to travel in the future, it may be worthwhile to get a combination voltage converter and plug adapter.

Check out www.traveltheunknown.com/estore for some adapters that will be suitable for Lebanon.

Communication

There are many internet cafes and call shops in Beirut and the connection speed is usually good. International calls are reasonably simple. Outside Beirut opportunities will be scarce. Most foreign mobile phones will work in most parts of Lebanon (though some will not).

Time

Lebanon is 2 hours ahead of GMT.

Note, the time difference will reduce to 1 hour when clocks go forward for summer time.

Laundry

Laundry facilities are offered by some of our hotels for a charge. In addition, laundry services can be found outside our hotel in all major cities and many smaller ones.

However, we advise you not to leave laundry to the last minute as sometimes drying times may be required and laundry will not be available at all stops.

MONEY

Spending Money

Every traveller is different and therefore spending money requirements will vary. Some people spend a lot of money on drinks, whereas others may spend more on souvenir or present shopping. Please consider your own spending habits when it comes to allowing for drinks, shopping, participating in optional activities and tipping.

Tipping

Tipping is totally voluntary and often not expected. It is however almost always appreciated. You should need no more than £30-40 (\$45-60) for tipping local staff in restaurants, hotels etc. It is also customary to tip guides and drivers if you have been happy with their services.

Departure Tax

Unless otherwise specified departure tax will be included in the cost of your package when you booked your international flight with *Travel The Unknown*. Where you are arranging your own international flights please check with your travel agent or airline.

Emergency Funds

Please also make sure you have access to an additional £200 (\$350), to be used when unforeseen incidents or circumstances outside our control (eg. a natural disaster, or political strife) necessitate a change to our intended itinerary. This is not a common occurrence but it's better to be prepared.

Money Exchange

Currency exchange rates often fluctuate. For the most up to date rates please refer to the following website: www.xe.com.

There are many ATM machines which accept Visa or Mastercard in Lebanon. Dollars are also widely accepted. Any cash you wish to carry should be in US dollars or as second choice Euro. Major credit cards are accepted in some larger shops and restaurants but usually only in the bigger cities.

TIP 1: Slightly torn, faded or badly marked banknotes may be difficult to exchange. Coins are typically not exchangeable.

TIP 2: We recommend you take out the majority of the spending money you require when you arrive in Beirut and distribute it and keep it in secure places throughout the rest of the trip.

NOTE: Make sure you inform your bank of the exact dates that you are going to Lebanon and that they ensure your card is not blocked when you are travelling.

RESPONSIBLE TRAVEL AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Responsible Travel

As regular travellers, one thing that never ceases to amaze and inspire us while travelling is the kindness and generosity of people, who often have very little to their name. We firmly believe that the people who make these places special should also benefit from them. Therefore as first preference we use local guides and locally-owned lodges, shops and eateries. We do our best to ensure that the benefits of our tours reach as widely as possible into the communities where they operate and also invest a significant amount of our profits in development projects within those communities.

Environment

The biggest environmental impact of your holiday with *Travel The Unknown* is the CO₂ generated by your flights and land travel. As a responsible tour operator, we have included in our tour prices the costs of offsetting CO₂ emissions from all international and domestic flights as well as land travel forming part of the tour.

We have partnered with *Climate Care* for this purpose. If you are making independent flight arrangements, we urge you to take responsibility for your CO₂ emissions by offsetting through *Climate Care*, or another reputable offsetting scheme.

We also ask you to be vigilant about disposing of your waste. Dispose of all rubbish correctly and do not leave litter or cigarette butts in natural environments.

Our brochures and stationery are printed on FSC-accredited or recycled paper. To minimise waste, all of our brochures and trip notes are available for download online.

Visit www.traveltheunknown.com/responsible for further information.

Culture Shock

Lebanon is a multi-religious country but the dress code is quite liberal generally though some areas are more conservative (esp. in Muslim areas). Knee-length shorts are acceptable for men but women might feel more comfortable wearing loose full length trousers and long sleeved-shirts in certain areas. For visiting mosques and other places of worship full length trousers should be worn and women may have to cover their heads. Bring light clothes for places that are hot. But also be properly prepared for the colder temperatures at night. If you have any questions please feel free to contact us. Full contact details can be found on our website: www.traveltheunknown.com/contactus.

Climate

Lebanon is a hot and dry country with long summers and short winters. The summers are extremely hot and dry while the winter nights can be bitterly cold and rainy, which is why the tour dates have been set for October and April when the temperature is the most pleasant.

In Beirut, typical daytime temperatures in October as well as in April will be in the low 20s (Celsius). In the mountains it will be cooler at around 15 – 20 degrees.

Irrespective of the time of the year travelling, you should take precaution against the sun.

WHAT TO BRING

The list below is not exhaustive:

- Any required medicines.
- Basic first aid kit, insect repellent and sunscreen (min. Factor 15).
- Clothing for both hot and cold conditions (can get cold at night). Practical clothing is strongly advised esp. long sleeved tops, long trousers and a sunhat. Lighter footwear for the evening e.g. sandals, tennis shoes, ...
- Trousers. Trails can be thorny in places
- Sandals and solid walking shoes.
- Torch, sunglasses, small towel, and electricity adapter.
- Waterproof bag for documents and electronics.
- Watch (strict time-keeping is required at times).
- Money for meals, souvenirs, contingencies.
- Day rucksack. Remember! Luggage follows

Optional

- Shorts
- Walking poles
- Camera
- Sleeping bag
- Binoculars

Many of the items required are also available in our e-store, www.traveltheunknown.com/estore.

Electronic Items

- Digital camera – bring accessories: memory cards, battery, charger
- If film camera – bring film, lenses, batteries, etc.
- Mobile phone and charger
- Plug adaptors
- Music player (MP3, CD player, iPod and relevant charger)
- Laptop and charger (useful if you want to keep a blog and upload photos)

Tour Photos

We prefer to use photos taken on our tours on our website so we actively encourage you to send us your photos. If you send us pictures we will also enter you in a draw to win some special prizes. Happy snapping!

Our Newsletter

If you would like to find out about new tours and all that is happening with *Travel The Unknown* then sign up to our newsletter on our website.

Lebanese Arabic Cheat Sheet

shukran	thank you
Merheba	Hello
laham	Meat
Ee	Yes
La	No
bedi	I would like...
Bedi laham	I would like some meat
Is mi (David)	My name is (David)
Shu ismak?	What is your name? (to a man)
Shu ismik?	What is your name? (to a woman)
Keefak?	How are you? (to a man)
Keefik?	How are you? (to a woman)
Ana bi-kheir	I am fine

Feedback

We have spent much time and effort to make your trip a memorable experience for all the right reasons. However, we are constantly looking to improve our tours and any feedback you can give us or suggestions you may have would be very much appreciated.