ARCHAEOLOGY OF LEBANON

7 days
Countries visited
Lebanon

Tour Highlights
• Experience Beirut’s beguiling mix of antiquity and modernity
• The National Museum in Beirut
• The stunning cave complex of Jeita Grotto
• Byblos, birthplace of the alphabet
• Baalbek, vast Roman complex
• Ancient cities of Sidon and Tyre
• The Temple of Eshmun

Places visited
Beirut • Jeita Grotto • Faqra • Byblos • Baalbek • Anjar • Sidon • Tyre • Eshmun

What's included
• Arrival & departure transfers
• Ground transport with driver
• Accommodation
• Meals (refer to itinerary for meal plan)
• English-speaking guide
• Entrance fees to sites & parks

What's not included
• Meals not mentioned in itinerary
• Drinks
• Visa fees
• Tipping
• Camera / video camera fees
• Personal items (laundry, telephone, etc.)
• Medical expenses
• Any services not mentioned in itinerary

All accommodation subject to availability. Final accommodation choices will be confirmed after booking.
Your Itinerary Explained

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Place visited</th>
<th>Meals</th>
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<td></td>
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<td>B: Breakfast</td>
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The first part of the text in each day is the itinerary schedule and will explain what you will normally see/do during this day of your itinerary.

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*The part of the day’s text in italics (and comes after the three dashes “---”) is background information on the places or sites on that day of your itinerary. It is not part of your itinerary and may mention places that will not be visited on your itinerary. If you have any questions please ask us. Travel times where noted are only meant as a guideline.*

### Tour Itinerary

#### Day 1

**Beirut**

Arrive into Beirut airport where you will be met by your Travel The Unknown representative and transferred to your hotel. Evening free to relax.

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*Overnight in Gems Hotel, Beirut*

#### Day 2

**Beirut - Jeita Grotto**

After breakfast, spend the entire day sight-seeing in and around Beirut. Start your day with a visit to Harissa where you will take the cable car up the mountain to the Shrine of Our Lady of Lebanon. Later visit the caves at Jeita before returning to Beirut where you will continue with a city tour. Drive to the downtown district to see the huge reconstruction project-taking place to create a new commercial and residential complex. On starting this project it was discovered that the capital is standing atop the site of a very ancient settlement going back at least 5,000 years. Recent excavations have uncovered important archaeological sites from Cananite, Phoenician, Persian, Roman, Byzantine, Omayyad, Abbassid, Crusader, Mamluke and Ottoman eras. The 1.80 sq. kilometers reconstruction project includes new buildings but constructed in the traditional style, besides hundreds of old structures that have been restored and renovated to their original shapes, including Beirut’s souks and historical mosques and churches. Later proceed to Corniche road and take a short walk in the favourite promenade of many Beirutis. Return to your hotel and spend the evening at your leisure.

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**jeita grotto** is a group of caves that have been sculpted over thousands of years by water. They were discovered in 1836 by Reverend William Thomson, an American missionary. The caves provide a tunnel or escape route for the underground river, which is the principal source of the Nar el-Kalb (Dog River). The lower galleries, discovered in 1836 and opened to the public in 1958, are visited by boat. The upper galleries, opened in January 1969, can be explored on foot.

**Beirut’s** history goes back more than 5,000 years. According to the Encyclopaedia Britannica, its antiquity is indicated by its name, which is derived from the Canaanite be’erot (“wells”), and refers to the underground water table that is still tapped by the local inhabitants. Historically occupied by the Romans, the Crusaders and the Ottomans among other ruling dynasties, Beirut’s art and architecture has had multiple and diverse influences. Excavations in the downtown area have unearthed layers of Phoenician, Hellenistic, Roman, Byzantine, Arab, Crusader and Ottoman remains. The first historical reference to Beirut dates from the 14th century BC, when it is mentioned in the cuneiform tablets of the Amarna letters, three letters that Ammunira of Biruta (Beirut) sent to the pharaoh of Egypt. Biruta is also referenced in the letters from Rib-Hadda, king of Byblos. The oldest settlement was on an island in the river that progressively silted up.

The city was known in the Roman period as Berytus, and the old Roman coins showed the head of Tycle, goddess of fortune, and the city’s symbol of a dolphin entwined around an anchor. Beirut’s rich artistic and archaeological history is reflected in its vast number of museums. Berytus’ power was destroyed by an earthquake, tidal wave and fire in 551 A.D. In the following century Arab Muslim forces took the city and in 1110 it fell to the Crusaders. In 1291 it was conquered by the Mamlukes. Ottoman rule began in 1516 and lasted for 400 years until the defeat of the Turks in World War I.

The French Mandate Period followed and in 1943 Lebanon gained its independence. Set between the Mediterranean and dramatic mountains rising up in the background, **Beirut is one of the Middle East’s most lively cities**. The rejuvenation of the Beirut Central District is one of the largest, most ambitious urban redevelopment projects ever undertaken. While Beirut has become one of the Middle East’s most modern cities, it still maintains its fascinating history and beautiful sites, as well as a thriving arts scene. Until the civil war ended in 1990, most of the archaeological sites discovered were found by accident. However, since then there have been excavations to uncover and investigate these phenomenal sites. **The Green Line** was a line of separation between the Muslims in West Beirut and the Christian front in East Beirut. It was green because it was uninhabited and therefore covered in vegetation. The local people are renowned for being extremely friendly and charming.

**Overnight in Gems Hotel, Beirut**

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<tr>
<th>Day 3</th>
<th>Faqra- Mashnaqa- Byblos</th>
<th>Meals</th>
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<td>After breakfast, visit the ruins of Faqra and Mashnaqa before continuing to the ancient wonder of Byblos, to explore the site. Return to Beirut for an overnight stay.</td>
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Byblos

The ruins of Faqra are 1600 meters above sea level and they extend over a small plane that towers over a deep valley where water of Nabaa el Aasal and Nabaa el Laban flow. The site is distinguished for its fascinating natural beauty and for the rocks made of dolomite which form a forest that is carved in a natural manner. Ernest Renan in his book, A Mission to Phoenicia, considered the spot as the most charming one in the mountain.

The coastal town of Byblos is located on a cliff of sandstone 40 km North of Beirut. Byblos bears outstanding witness to the beginnings of the Phoenician civilization and scholars say the site of Byblos goes back at least seven thousand years. Touted as the birthpace of the modern alphabet, Byblos was also once the epicentre of the world’s shipping. The remarkable Crusader Castle was built in the 12th century. The castle, along with the town was captured and its walls destroyed in 1188. The Crusaders recaptured and rebuilt it in 1197.

Overnight in Gems Hotel, Beirut

Day 4 Baalbek - Anjar Meals

After breakfast, depart to visit the historic cities of Baalbek and Anjar. Overnight in Beirut.

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For centuries the temples of Baalbek (a.k.a the “Sun City”) lay under metres of rubble, obscured by medieval fortifications. Excavation and restoration work began in 1898 however and it has since been recognized as hugely important in Roman history as it acts as a model of Imperial Roman architecture. It is probably the most important Roman site in the whole of the Middle East. Baalbek’s temples were built on an ancient tell that goes back at least to the end of the third millennium B.C. The temple was begun in the last quarter of the 1st century B.C., and was finished by the 3rd century AD. The temples were closed in 313 AD when Christianity became the Roman Empire’s official religion. Baalbek’s collection of stunning temples, mosques, courtyards and statues are a must for any visit to Lebanon.

Founded during the Umayyad period under Caliph Walid Ibn Abd Al-Malak (705-715), the city of Anjar was an inland commercial centre, at the crossroads of two important routes: one between Beirut and Damascus and the other crossing the Bekaa and leading from Homs to Tiberiade. Only discovered by archaeologists at the end of the 1940s, excavations uncovered a fortified city surrounded by walls and flanked by forty towers, a rectangular area (385 x 350 m). Dominated by gates flanked by porticos, an important North-South axis and a lesser East-West axis, superposed above the main collectors for sewers, divide the city into four equal quadrants. Public and private buildings are laid out according to a strict plan: the great palace of the Caliph and the Mosque in the South-East quarter occupies the highest part of the site, while the small palaces (harems) and the baths are located in the North-East quarter to facilitate the functioning and evacuation of waste waters. Secondary functions and living quarters are distributed in the North-West and South-West quarters. The ruins are dominated by spectacular vestiges of a monumental tetrapyle, as well as by the walls and colonnades of the Umayyad palace, three levels of which have been preserved. These structures incorporate decorative or architectonical elements of the Roman era.

Overnight in Gems Hotel, Beirut
Journey to visit the archaeological site of Sidon, stopping first to visit the Temple of Eshmun. Continue to Tyre for a visit of the town. Return to Beirut for overnight.

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Sidon (a.k.a. Saida) is located at the meeting point of three continents and, as such, has been the crossroads of many civilizations whose traces may still be seen today. It is known as the capital of the South. Sidon’s inhabitation goes back as far as 6000 BC. Its trade links with Egypt aided its rise during the Phoenician period in the 12th to 10th centuries BC. Despite invasions in 1200 BC by Philistines and in 675 BC by Assyrian king Esarhaddon, Sidon reached its pinnacle under the Persian Empire (550 - 330 B.C.). At the end of the Persian era in 351 BC, unable to resist the superior forces of Artaxerxes III, the Sidonians locked their gates and set fire to their city rather than to submit to the invader - more than 40,000 died in the blaze. After the disaster the city was too weak to oppose the triumphal march of Alexander the Great in 333 BC. This city’s turbulent history of invasion and destruction is evident in its buildings and sites and makes for a fascinating visit. The city’s sea castle, lively port and excellent seafood also make it a popular spot for locals.

Legend has it that Tyre, (or Sur in Turkish), was the birthplace of Europa (a Phoenician woman of high lineage from Greek mythology after whom Europe was named) and Dido (Queen of Carthage). Tyre has a long and illustrious history. In ancient times it was the most important city of the Phoenicians, amassing great wealth and power from the export of purple dye. In the first century AD, Tyre was the home of a Christian community visited by St. Paul, and it became a major stronghold of the Crusaders in the 12th century. Today, Tyre is the fourth largest city in Lebanon and is famous for its ancient ruins and a Roman Hippodrome, which became a UNESCO world heritage site in 1984.

The Temple of Eshmun is an ancient place of worship dedicated to Eshmun, the Phoenician god of healing. The site was occupied from the 7th century BC to the 8th century AD, suggesting an integrated relationship with the nearby city of Sidon. Although originally constructed by Sidonian king Eshmunazar II in the Achaemenid era (c. 529–333 BC) to celebrate the city's recovered wealth and stature, the temple complex was greatly expanded by Bodashtart, Yatan-milk and later monarchs until the fall of Paganism under Christianity. The continued expansion spanned many centuries of alternating independence and foreign hegemony, and today the sanctuary features a wealth of different architectural and decorative styles and influences. Compromising an esplanade, a grand court, a huge limestone terrace and a monumental podium, the sanctuary features a series of ritual ablution basins fed by canals channelling water from the Asclepius river (modern Awali) and from the sacred "Ydll" spring. These installations were used for therapeutic and ‘purification’ purposes by the cult of Eshmun. The sanctuary site has yielded many artefacts of value, especially those inscribed with Phoenician texts, providing valuable insight into the site's history and that of ancient Sidon.

Overnight in Gems Hotel, Beirut
Day 6  |  Beirut  | Meals

After breakfast in the hotel, make a leisurely visit to the National Museum of Beirut, followed by a trip to the American University of Beirut (AUB), where you will visit the their museum. The AUB Archaeological Museum, founded in 1868, is the third oldest museum in the region, after Cairo and Constantinople. It is a regional Museum with collections from 7 countries Lebanon, Syria, Cyprus, Egypt, Palestine, Iraq, and Iran. The Museum was renovated in 1999 and reopened to the public in 2006

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The National Museum of Beirut is the main archaeological museum in Lebanon. Opening in 1942, it boasts around 1,300 artefacts which date from pre-historic times to the Medieval Mamluk era. Most of the finds are Medieval, but the museum holds a reputation for ancient Phoenician objects.

Overnight in Gems Hotel, Beirut

Day 7  |  Beirut  | Meals

After breakfast you will be taken to Beirut International Airport for your return flight home.

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Flight
Accommodation

Beirut: Gems Hotel (Hotel)  6 nights

Located on bustling Maqdessi street in the heart of Hamra district a short drive from Beirut International Airport, where shopping, entertainment, nightlife and dining choices make the hotel the perfect place for vacationers and business travelers alike. Every room is comfortable and secure and includes an in-room safe, mini refrigerator, coffee and tea maker, microwave, hair dryer, satellite television and 24-hour free wireless Internet access.

Phone: +961 1 746 067
Address: Makdessy, Beirut, Lebanon
Website: www.gemshotel.com.lb

All accommodation subject to availability. Final accommodation choices will be confirmed after booking.