

ASIA · HISTORY · FOOD · WINE · NIGHTLIFE · CULTURE



Lebanon

Lebanon squeezes Roman temples, Phoenician harbours, cedar groves and Ottoman-era souks into a country you can cross in a morning. Baalbek's colossal columns and the layered ruins of Byblos are world-class, Beirut's restaurants and bars are among the region's best, and the mountains offer cool air in summer. Check conditions carefully before booking.



The UK Foreign Office (FCDO) advises against all travel to parts of Lebanon.

Read the latest FCDO travel advice before planning a trip. Your travel insurance may be invalid if you travel against FCDO advice. FCDO advice last updated 10 August 2026.

 CAPITAL Beirut	 CURRENCY Lebanese pound (LBP) £1 ≈ LBP 119,600	 LANGUAGE Arabic, French English, Armenian	 BEST TIME Apr–Jun, Sep–Oct
 DAILY BUDGET £45–£250 ££ Moderate	 PLUGS Type A, B, C, D, G 220V · UK plugs fit	 FLIGHT FROM LONDON 4h 50m direct ~£300–£650 return	 TIME ZONE UTC+2 standard time

Lebanon is a narrow strip of coast backed by two mountain ranges, with the fertile Bekaa Valley between them. Distances are short, so most visitors base themselves in Beirut and make day trips: north along the coast to Byblos and Batroun, up into the mountains to the Jeita Grotto and the Qadisha Valley, and over the Mount Lebanon range to Baalbek and the Bekaa wineries. The Chouf, south-east of the capital, adds Beiteddine's palace and the cedar forests of the Shouf Biosphere Reserve. A week covers the essentials, ideally with a driver, since public transport is informal.

Lebanon is sociable, food-obsessed and stylish, and its hospitality is famous. Since the 2019 financial collapse the economy has run largely on US dollars in cash, and prices in Beirut can match those in southern Europe, though the countryside is cheaper. Mains electricity has long been patchy, so many hotels rely on generators. Political and security conditions can change quickly, and the FCDO advice differs sharply between regions, so check it before every trip. Visitors are often surprised by how freely Arabic, French and English mingle in a single sentence, and by how late Beirut eats and parties.

Top 5 highlights

- 1

HISTORY

Baalbek

The Roman temple complex of Heliopolis, in the Bekaa Valley, includes the remarkably intact Temple of Bacchus and six surviving columns of the Temple of Jupiter, among the largest the Romans ever raised.
- 2

HISTORY

Byblos (Jbeil)

One of the world's oldest continuously inhabited towns, layered with Phoenician temples, a Roman theatre and a Crusader castle above a small harbour. The restored souk and seafood restaurants make it an easy evening out.

3

NATURE

Jeita Grotto

Twin limestone caves north-east of Beirut: explore the upper gallery on foot among huge stalactites, then take a boat along the underground river in the lower cave, which usually closes in winter.

4

SACRED SITE

Qadisha Valley and the Cedars of God

A deep gorge in the north sheltering cliff-side monasteries and hermitages of the Maronite church, crowned by one of the last groves of ancient Lebanon cedars. Walk between villages such as Bsharri and Hasroun.

5

ARCHITECTURE

Beiteddine Palace

Emir Bashir II's palace in the Chouf mountains, built over some thirty years from 1788, with marble courtyards, painted reception rooms and a fine collection of Byzantine mosaics. Combine it with the old village of Deir el Qamar nearby.

Biggest cities

LARGEST CITY

Beirut

≈ 2 million people

A seafront capital of contrasts: walk the Corniche, see the National Museum and the rebuilt downtown, then eat and drink in Mar Mikhael and Gemmayzeh, still recovering from the 2020 port explosion.

2ND LARGEST CITY

Tripoli

≈ 400,000 people

Lebanon's second city has the country's most atmospheric Mamluk souks, hammams and khans, a Crusader-era citadel and famous sweet shops, with far fewer visitors than Beirut.

3RD LARGEST CITY

Sidon

≈ 230,000 people

The southern port of Saida has a thirteenth-century Crusader Sea Castle on an islet, a covered old souk and an engaging soap museum housed in a former soap factory.

Ranked by urban-area population where available. Figures are rounded estimates, and sources define city limits differently, so rankings of similar-sized cities can vary.

When to go to Lebanon

Best time: **Apr–Jun, Sep–Oct.**

Jan

Feb

Mar

Apr

May

Jun

Jul

Aug

Sep

Oct

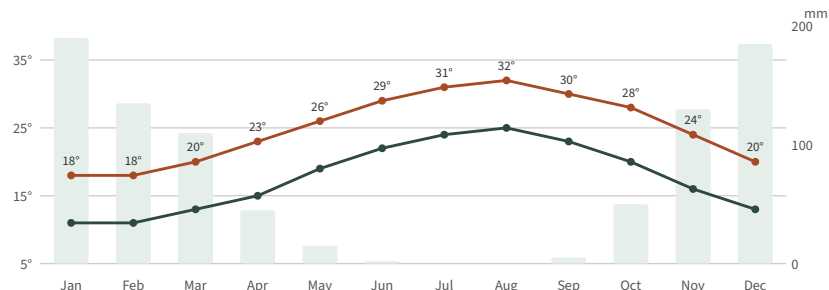
Nov

Dec

■ Best ■ Good ■ Mixed ■ Poor

Average climate in Beirut

— High °C — Low °C ■ Rain (mm)



Festivals & events

Jul–Aug	Baalbeck International Festival Concerts, opera and dance staged among the Roman temples, a tradition dating to 1956 that has hosted Ella Fitzgerald and Fairuz; programmes depend on each year's conditions.
Jul–Aug	Byblos International Festival Summer concerts on a stage beside the medieval harbour and ruins of Byblos, mixing international pop and rock acts with stars of the Arab world.
Jul–Aug	Beiteddine Art Festival Opera, classical music and big-name concerts in the palace courtyards of Beiteddine, with the Chouf hills cooling the evening air.

How much does Lebanon cost?

SHOESTRING £45 per person / day ≈ LBP 5,381,984 hostels, street food, buses	MID-RANGE £110 per person / day ≈ LBP 13,155,962 3-star hotels, restaurants, some taxis	COMFORTABLE £250 per person / day ≈ LBP 29,899,914 4-star+, guided trips, private transfers
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Estimates per person per day, excluding flights. Prices vary by season and city.

Food to try

Kibbeh Minced lamb pounded with bulgur wheat and spices, shaped into fried torpedoes, baked in trays or served raw as kibbeh nayyeh with mint and olive oil.	Tabbouleh Lebanon's parsley salad, far more herb than grain, with a little fine bulgur, tomato, mint, lemon and olive oil; a fixture of every mezze table.	Man'oushe Breakfast flatbread straight from the bakery oven, spread with za'atar and olive oil, cheese or minced meat, then folded and eaten on the move.
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Getting around

There are no trains, and public transport is informal but cheap. Shared 'service' taxis and minibuses run fixed routes from Beirut's Charles Helou and Cola hubs to Byblos, Tripoli, Sidon and the Bekaa. Uber works in Greater Beirut. For mountain sights, hiring a car with a driver for the day is common and sensible; traffic on the coastal highway is heavy, so start early.

Practical information

PLUGS & VOLTAGE A B C D G 220V — UK plugs fit	EMERGENCY NUMBERS Ambulance: 140 Fire: 175 Police: 112 Source: FCDO “Getting help”
DIALLING CODE +961	TIME ZONE UTC+2 (standard time)

TAP WATER

Not safe — drink bottled or treated water

DRIVING

On the right

TIPPING

Around 10–15% in restaurants unless service is already included; tip valets, drivers and guides, ideally in US dollars.

ETIQUETTE

Lebanon is multi-faith: cover shoulders and knees in mosques and churches. Avoid political or sectarian debate unless invited, never photograph military sites or checkpoints, and accept offered coffee graciously.

MAIN AIRPORTS

Beirut–Rafic Hariri International Airport (BEY), Beirut

Visas & entry for Lebanon

Shown for a British passport.

Visa on arrival

British citizens can normally apply for a free single-entry tourist or family visit visa on arrival at Beirut airport. A tourist visa is valid for one month from the date of entry. Travellers can extend their visa for up to three months at the General Security offices.

British citizens can also obtain a visa from the Lebanese Embassy in London. These may be valid for a different time period. Travellers should make sure they understand their visa validity to avoid any penalties for overstaying.

From the UK government's FCDO entry requirements for British passport holders — read the full page for passport validity, permits and exceptions.

Health & vaccinations



See a travel health nurse, GP or travel clinic **6–8 weeks before you go**. Make sure routine UK vaccinations (such as MMR and diphtheria-tetanus-polio) are up to date.

RECOMMENDED FOR MOST TRAVELLERS

Hepatitis A

Tetanus

SOMETIMES ADVISED — DEPENDS ON YOUR TRIP, ACTIVITIES AND HEALTH

Hepatitis B

Measles

Rabies

Typhoid

YELLOW FEVER CERTIFICATE

No yellow fever certificate is required to enter.

MALARIA

No malaria risk

Source: TravelHealthPro (National Travel Health Network and Centre), checked 21 October 2026. This is a summary, not medical advice.

Public holidays in Lebanon

The next 12 months. Banks, offices and some sights may close, and transport and hotels get busy around these dates.

Sun 22 Nov 2026

Independence Day

Fri 25 Dec 2026	Christmas Day
Fri 1 Jan 2027	New Year's Day
Wed 6 Jan 2027	Armenian Orthodox Christmas Day
Tue 9 Feb 2027	Saint Maron's Day
Tue 9 Mar 2027	Eid al-Fitr (date may shift)
Wed 10 Mar 2027	Eid al-Fitr (date may shift)
Thu 25 Mar 2027	Feast of the Annunciation
Fri 26 Mar 2027	Catholic Good Friday
Fri 30 Apr 2027	Orthodox Good Friday
Sat 1 May 2027	Labour Day
Sun 2 May 2027	Martyrs' Day
Sun 9 May 2027	Resistance and Liberation Day
Sun 16 May 2027	Eid al-Adha (date may shift)
Mon 17 May 2027	Eid al-Adha (date may shift)
Sun 6 Jun 2027	Islamic New Year Day (date may shift)
Tue 15 Jun 2027	Ashura (date may shift)
Sat 14 Aug 2027	Prophet's Birthday (date may shift)
Sun 15 Aug 2027	Assumption Day

National holidays only. Dates based on lunar calendars can move by a day or two depending on official announcements.

Useful phrases in Lebanese Arabic

ENGLISH	LEBANESE ARABIC	SAY IT
Hello	مرحبا	<i>MAR-ha-ba</i>
Thank you	شكراً	<i>SHOO-kran</i>
Please	من فضلك	<i>min FAD-lak</i>
Excuse me	عفواً	<i>AF-wan</i>
How much is this?	قَدِيش هيدا؟	<i>ad-DAYSH HAY-da</i>

Know before you go

Bring plenty of US dollars in clean, small notes. Since the 2019 crisis many prices are quoted in dollars, card acceptance is patchy and change often comes in Lebanese pounds.

Check the FCDO travel advice before booking and again before you travel: it differs sharply from region to region and can change at short notice.

Leave Beirut early for day trips: the coastal highway north towards Jounieh and Byblos jams by mid-morning and again in the evening rush.