



## **LEBANESE MINISTRY OF TOURISM**

**The Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe 11th Annual Advisory Forum  
5-7 October 2022, Chania (Greece) - Minoa Palace Hotel  
Member States of the Enlarged Partial Agreement Governing Board Meeting  
EPA MEMBER STATES ACCESSION CEREMONY**

*Eng. Walid Nassar*

*Minister of Tourism- Lebanon*

*Represented by Dr. Rachid Chamoun, Advisor to the Minister for International Relations*

*Excellences, Chairman and members of the Governing Board, Executive Secretary, Honored Ministers and representatives of the Enlarged Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes, Council of Europe.*

Within the embodiment of this cultural event, we are honored to celebrate Lebanon accession in its position the 35-Member State of the EPA into the cultural routes of the council of Europe. Lebanon, the very first Euro-Mediterranean Middle Eastern country to be a Member State to the EPA, within the Council of Europe .

Lebanon's history has been shaped by its strategic location at the crossroads between the East and the West and the gate to the Middle East.

Homeland of the Canaanites/Phoenicians, the inventors of the alphabet, their civilization thrived on the east coast of the Mediterranean for more than 1000 years before conquerors arrived to the Levant. The country has witnessed the rise and fall of multiple civilizations whose mark can be felt today in Lebanon's rich cultural heritage. Ancient Egyptians, Persians, Greek, Romans, Byzantines, Arabs, Crusaders, Mamluks, and Ottomans have succeeded each other in ruling the land. At the fall of the Ottoman Empire, Lebanon was briefly under the French mandate in the Levant before gaining its independence in 1943.

Lebanon's rich cultural identity is reflected in its tangible and intangible heritage. Archeological sites are scattered along the coastline as well as in the mountains and the Beqaa Valley. Lebanon's cuisine has gained worldwide fame and its wine industry is ancient and prospering.

Natural heritage Protected Areas in Lebanon includes 8 Nature Reserves, 24 Natural sites, 5 Himas, 12 Protected Forests and 5 cultural heritage sites inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List.

Our institutional affiliation with the European Institute of Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe has strengthened our partnership with "La Rotta dei Fenici" ,the Routes of the Olive Tree, Iter Vitis - Wine Route, and Routes of El legado Andalusí' by the Umayyad route, and shall reach out to benefit from the diverse cultural routes crossing Europe and the Mediterranean .

Our intercultural dialogue shall benefit from and contribute to the cultural values and strategies of the European Institute of Cultural Routes, and seek towards enhancing and sustaining our institutional joint mission to disseminate knowledge about Lebanon and the Mediterranean region.

We are keen to establish mutually beneficial Public-Private partnerships; we appreciate the collaboration, support and efforts of our national and international partners that are working in line with the ministry's vision and action plan.

The past twenty-four months in Lebanon have presented the local community with certain difficulties in financial constraints, shifting socio-political alliances, and the evolving requirements of the World Health Organizations recommendations of dealing with the pandemic. Historically, tourism and hospitality is about bringing people together and making them feel at home, and the above constraints have created a situation that is particularly challenging to cope with and more than ever the need for an efficient local management of destinations.



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In conjunction to the above, the Lebanese Ministry of Tourism has established a **Destination Management Organization (DMO) system** through defining a regulatory framework and mechanism to facilitate the development of their basic principles for the operation. The core objectives of the DMO is to implement the decentralization of power, and reciprocally increasing chances for local community empowerment, creation of jobs, local cultural tourism guides and national awareness.

The DMO offices are entrusted with responsibilities that exceed the scope of the centralized state-level management. This meets our current strategic direction for decentralization through the launch of 37 new tourism offices across the country, all connected and supported through the Ministry's Headquarters.

In spite of the current socio-political and socio-economic difficulties Lebanon is facing, the Ministry of Tourism continues to support and engage in national and international activities towards protecting and promoting our cultural heritage through sustainable cultural tourism –reaffirming our future vision for Lebanon where its citizen can live in a peaceful state of humanity, harmony, and peace.

The Ministry of Tourism is keen to harness the power of Public-Private partnerships, as the tourism industry is empowered to evolve and develop as market demands change and re-position themselves due to divergent parameters stemming from various sources both locally and internationally.

Lebanon's Tourism sector remains robust, and will continue to evolve with the collaboration and support of the national and international organizations and institutions; especially as an integral part of the mission within the embodiment of this cultural event. Cultural Route of the Council of Europe the Umayyad Route and the Phoenicians' Route and the World Tourism Organization – UNWTO.