

ANJAR







Anjar

Located 58 kilometers east of Beirut, Anjar, a World Heritage site, is the Umayyad city in Lebanon. It was constructed in the first half of the 8th century, along with many palatial cities that the Umayyads constructed in various places in Syria, Jordan, Palestine and Lebanon. The city plan is well preserved and it attests to the clear Roman and Byzantine influence on Islamic city planning. In its ruins, we learn about construction methods in late antique period. Scattered ornaments from the period are visible on many standing walls. It has a decumanus and a cardo that meet in the center of the city. A well-preserved throne

hall of a basilican is located on the northeastern side of the city. The high ramparts of Anjar of 7 meters testify to its former glory.

Like the other Umayyad cities, it is in the midst of some of the richest agricultural land in Lebanon and there are about 500 orchards in and around Anjar. It is located on the natural link between the Bekaa valley and Damascus. The city was abandoned after the Umayyad period and was never inhabited since.

Spring is a great time to visit as the trees flower, dotting the landscape with white and pink. Autumn is also a good time, if only to enjoy fruit picking and tasting.

Presently a new village has developed next to the original Umayyad city. Its inhabitants are Armenians who migrated from Cilicia in Turkey in the early 20th century.

It is a great food destination with many restaurants boasting a mix of Lebanese and Armenian flavors and numerous locals who produce their own not-to-be-missed homemade preserves, a great gift to buy and bring back home.

Umayyad city of Anjar

Anjar was founded by Caliph Walid Ibn 'Abd al-Malik around 705 AD, although according to some other sources, the construction of the city is attributed to his son, Ibrahim. Nevertheless, the Umayyads built it and turned it into an important inland commercial center as it linked Damascus, Homs, Baalbek and Tiberias. It shone for only 20-30 years, after which the Abbasids took over the empire and overran the city. Anjar offers a great example of the architectural mix between the Roman-Byzantine and the Islamic style, as shown by various construction techniques and decorations of their monuments. It was just after Lebanon's independence (1940's) that experts started investigating the site, then covered by swamps. They drained the swamps; planted cypress and eucalyptus; excavated most of the site and restored some monuments.



The Great Palace: At the end of the main road stands what is left of the Great Palace. One wall and several arcades of the southern part of the Palace have been reconstructed. The Palace was rectangular and had 2 gates, one to the east and one to the west. These entrances are rectangular spaces with doors leading to a 40 m2 open courtyard

Fortified Walls: The Umayyad city of Anjar is approximately

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The Umayyad city of Anjar is approximately 114,000 square meters. It is enclosed by a 2-meter thick wall with three stairways built on each interior wall to allow access to the upper part. The walls are fortified by 40 towers, spread across a rectangular area. The site is divided by a north-south and an east-west axis into four equal quadrants, based on earlier Roman planning. The Great Palace and the Mosque are located in the southeast quarter and are on the highest part of the site; the residential area, along with the special service and crafts areas are in the southwest quarter; the Little Palace and another residential area are in the northwest quarter; and a third Palace and public bath are in the northeast quarter. Underneath the city are the sewage collectors. The baths are laid out exactly like Roman baths with a large changing room, two warm rooms, and two hot rooms. To



Residential: A city with 600 shops and an overwhelming concern for security must have required a fair number of people. Keeping this in mind, archaeologists looked for remains of an extensive residential area and found it just beyond the tetrapylons in the southwest quadrant of the city. However, these residential quarters received the least attention from archaeologists and need further excavation.



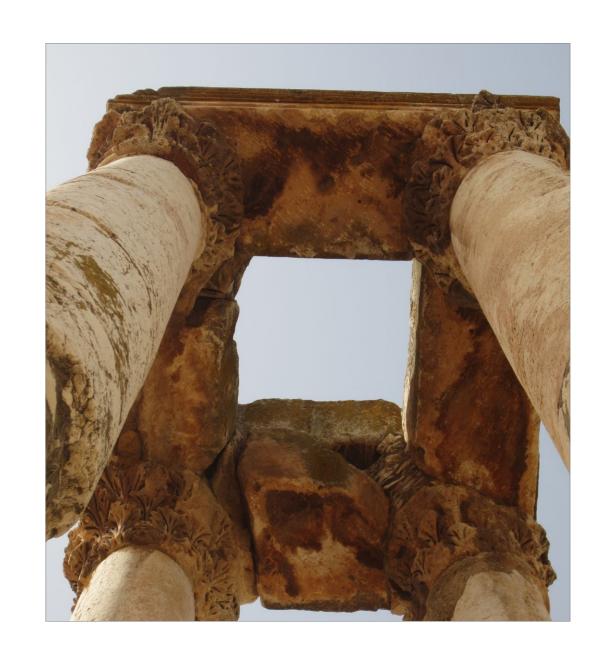


of a mosque which had two entrances and a third private entrance for the exclusive use of the Caliph.

the left of the main road, lays the remains of the little palace. If you look carefully you might spot some intricate byzantine-inspired engravings of owls, eagles, seashells and acanthus leaves.

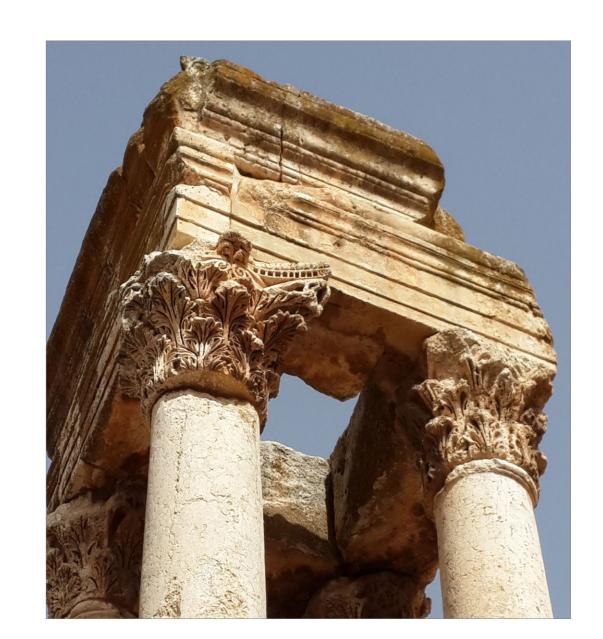
At the crossroads between the North-South axis (main road) and the East-West axis, the Tetrapylons mark the four corners of the intersection, and incorporate Greek inscriptions and Corinthian capitals with Umayyad embellishing techniques. The stonework of the walls is quite noticeable with a layer of large cut blocks, and layers of brick. At the end of the main road stands what is left of the Great Palace. One wall and several arcades of the southern part of the Palace have been reconstructed. The Palace was rectangular and had 2 gates, one to the east and one to the west. These entrances are rectangular spaces with doors leading to a

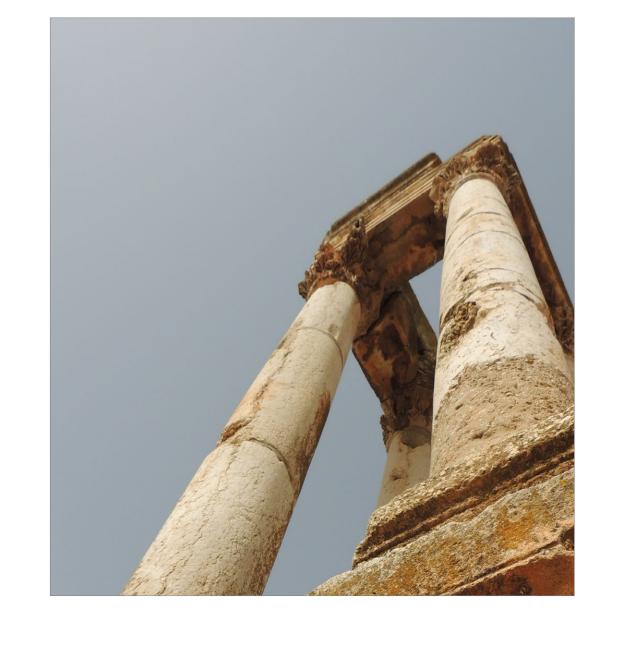




40 m2 open courtyard.







Tetrapylons: At the city's crossroads you'll find another hint that the Umayyads were great recyclers. Tetrapylons mark the four corners of the intersection. This configuration, called a tetrastyle, is remarkably reminiscent of Roman architecture. One of the tetrapylons has been reconstructed with its full quota of four columns. Note the Greek inscriptions at the base of the columns and the Corinthian capitals at the top of the columns, with their characteristic carved acanthus leaves - delightful to look at, but definitely not original to the Umayyads.





across a rectangular area.















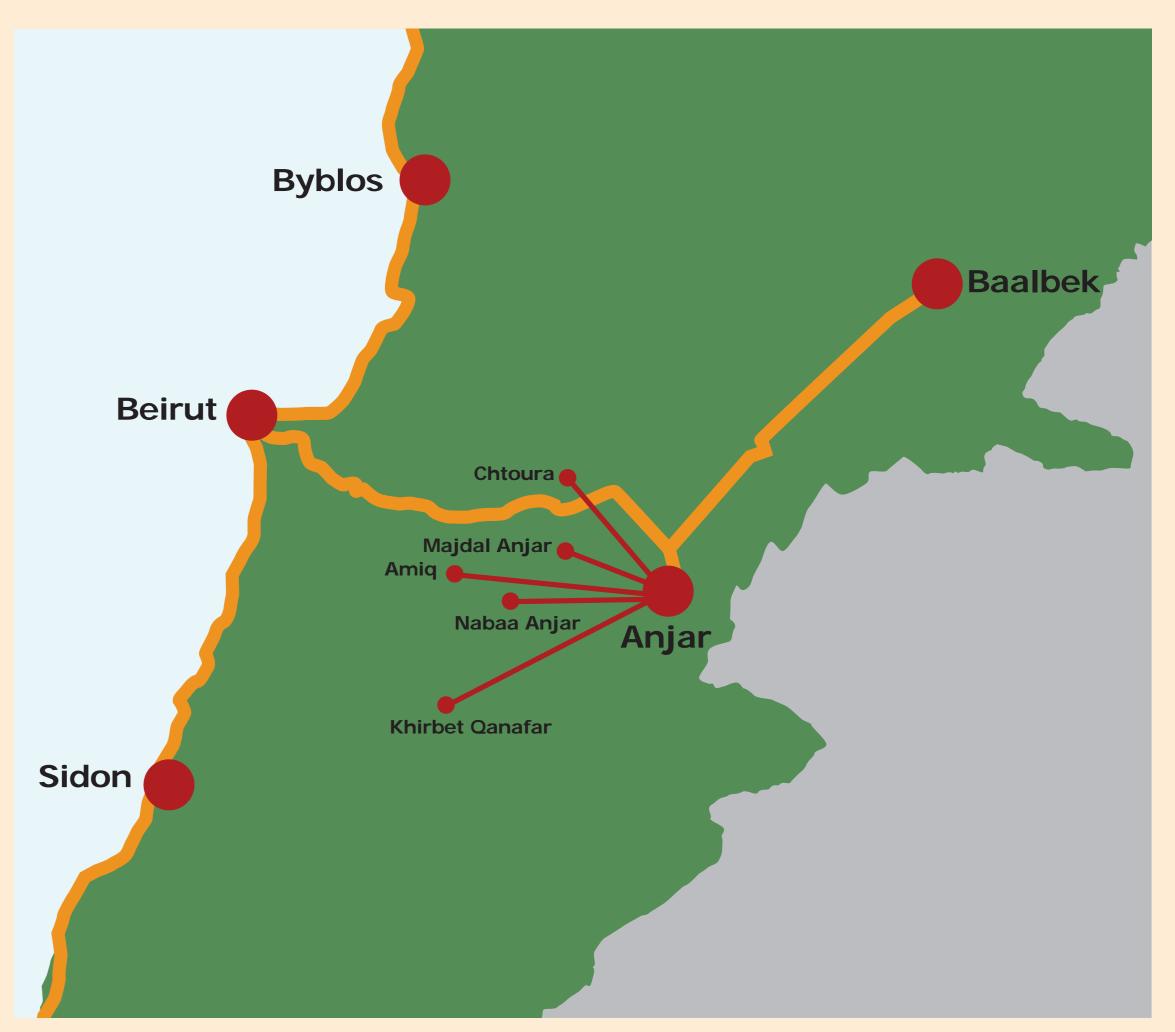
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Surroundings











In the village center of **Majdal Anjar** (3 km south from Anjar) stands a very charming mosque built in the Ayyubid era. This small medieval town and its mosque were a mandatory stop on the road linking the Bekaa to Damascus.

Amiq

Approximately 23 km from Anjar, the marshes of Amiq (largest wetland of the country) are the remains of a network of lakes and marshes that once covered a vast part of the plain, and still serve as an important stop for migratory birds en route between Europe and Africa, sheltering rare and protected species of birds in the winter. In addition, this area is used for irrigation and as a pasture for the region's cattle during the dry season, which usually occurs between August and November. The site is a privileged meeting place for hunters, fishermen and lovers of nature.

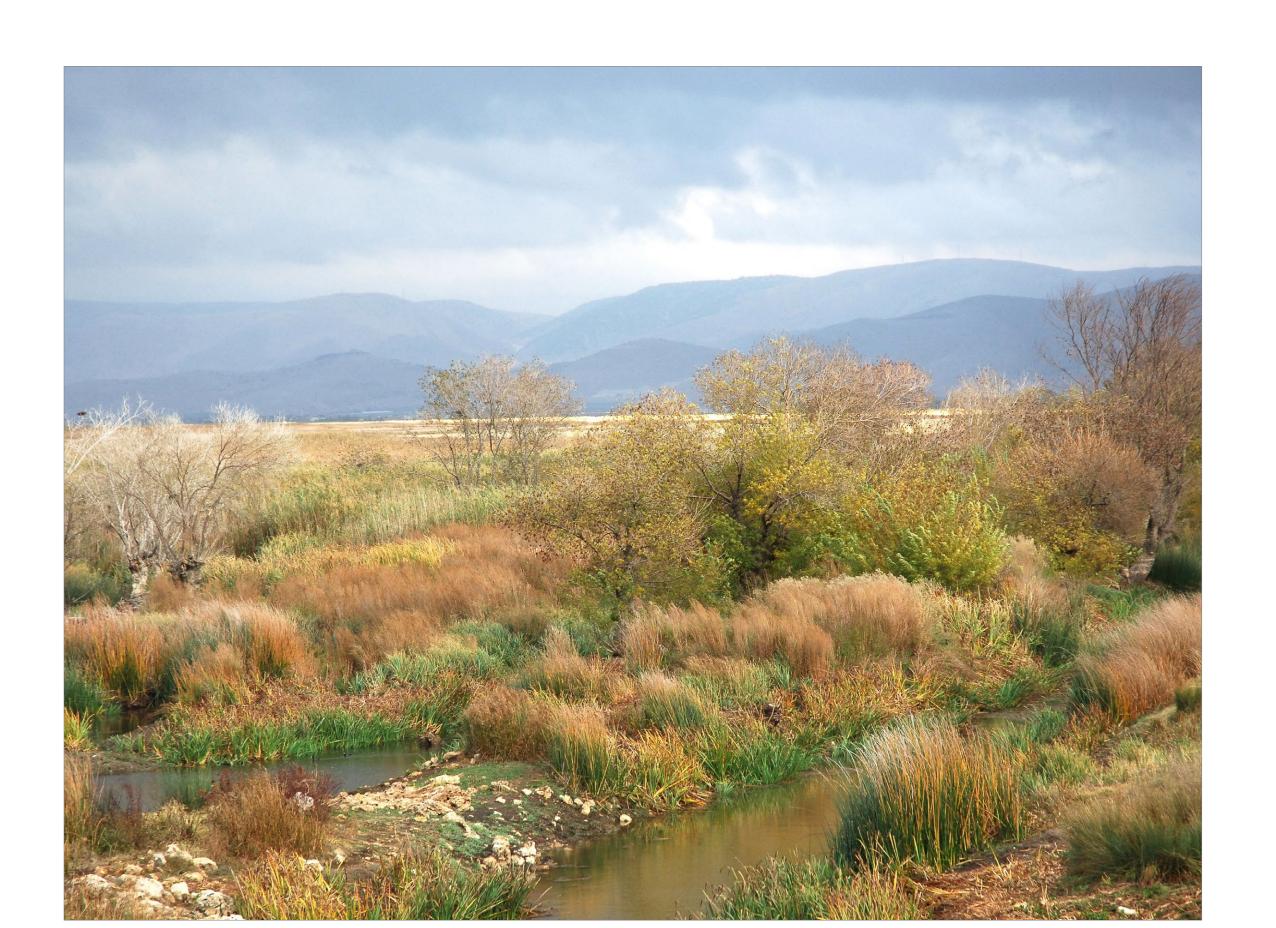
The area is known for growing vine trees and before arriving to Anjar one has to pass by many wineries.

Chtoura is located around 44 kilometers east from Beirut, on an ancient major road used since the Roman era until today. Chtoura is where many wineries exist: Ksara, Domaine des

Tourelles, Massaya, Nakad, etc. It is evident that wine making is an ancient activity in that region.

Nabaa Anjar and Nabaa Shamessen (Nabaa = water spring) are tributaries of the Litani River (See Arnoun). Located further south, they are bordered by a marsh, and are considered a protected area by the Society for the Protection of Nature in Lebanon (SPNL). It is a bird sanctuary for endangered species (Syrian Serin), a bottleneck for African Eurasian Water birds, and home to the common otter.

The charming village of Khirbet Qanafar, around 30 km south-west from Anjar, in the Beqaa stands on the eastern slope of Mount Lebanon. It has Roman tombs attesting a strong human activity and the medieval shrine of Sheikh Mosafer venerated by Muslims and Druze. Two water powered mills dating from the Ottoman era must be visited in the plains of the village. Anjar is famous for its apple orchards (more than 500 orchards in the area) and its governmentsponsored trout farm where it is possible to see the farming process from egg to fish. It is best to visit Anjar between August and late October, during cultivation season. Apple picking, tree planting and irrigation are then explained by local farmers, if you book a tour beforehand.





Amiq



Chtoura



Plain of Bekaa



Majdal Anjar















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