



Baalbek

The city of Baalbek is a major city in the Northern Begaa valley, approximately 85 kilometers from Beirut. This vibrant city is famed for its Roman remains of a large temple complex. It was known as Heliopolis in the Roman period. The image of six standing columns from the peristyle of the temple of Jupiter has become the icon of cultural tourism in Lebanon. The original temple complex included four monumental temples, those of Jupiter, Bacchus, Venus and

Mercury; the last of which did not survive. It also includes an enormous propylaea and vast courtyards. The archaeological site in the city is a UNESCO World heritage site (http://whc. unesco.org/en/list/294).

Baalbek has been occupied by successive civilizations. Recent excavation dates some of its finds to the Bronze Age, however the Romans gave particular attention to this site because of

its geographic location as an end of a series of cities in the eastern Mediterranean which were caravan stops for the commercial routes from Central Asia, India and China, among these cities is Palmyra in Syria. The city was also important for the successive Muslim dynasties that ruled the eastern Mediterranean especially for the Umayyads, the Ayyubids and the Mamluks.



Over the three first centuries of the first millennium the Romans constructed the temples of Baalbek. The present state of these temples does not show the original majestic view of their monumentality. However, what remains attests to the grandeur of these Roman architectural complexes.

They are clustered in three major complexes: the complex of the temple of Jupiter, the complex of the temple of Bacchus, and that of the temple of Venus. The temple of Mercury has all disappeared, except for restored stairway.

The Complex of the Temple of Jupiter



Theodosius (379-395), this court was covered and rectilinear exedrae. with a dome, and the space was transformed into a church. The exedras had 30 granite sacrificial Altar. columns in antis.

It includes a Propylaea, a hexagonal forecourt, a great right angle court, an altar, a tower, a ritual pools and the Temple of Jupiter.

This complex is reached through a monumental, partially restored, stairway which leads to the Propylaea whose façade once had a colonnade of 12 granite columns. The propylaea is featured in a lithograph print by the artist-traveler David Roberts with one of its massive flat arches above one of its doors. The rear of the propylaea has three doors which give onto the hexagonal forecourt. It has four rectilinear exedras. It is believed that in the time of Byzantine emperor



Ras El Ain spring: The Ras El Ain spring furnished the city with water since Antiquity. Next to it, one can see traces of a Roman shrine - a Nympheum as well as the remains of a Mamluk Mosque built in 1277 A.D.

From the forecourt one may enter the Great Court, constructed in the second century AD. It is 134 meter long and 112 meters wide, and it was the place of the major ritual events. On three of its sides it had three porticos with three colonnades, with eighty Egyptian granite columns, eight of these columns were transported to Constantinople to be installed in the Cathedral of Hagia Sophia (537 AD). Behind the porticos there were alternating semicircular

Close to the stairs that leads to another platform on which rests the temple of Jupiter there is the

The Temple of Jupiter stood on a 7 meter high platform. It measures 88 by 48 meters, and it is reached through a monumental stairway. This temple is now all in ruins, only six of the columns of its peristyle (which totaled 54) survived, they form the iconic photogenic subject. The height of each of the columns is 22 meters, and they are mounted by the remains of the temple entablature.



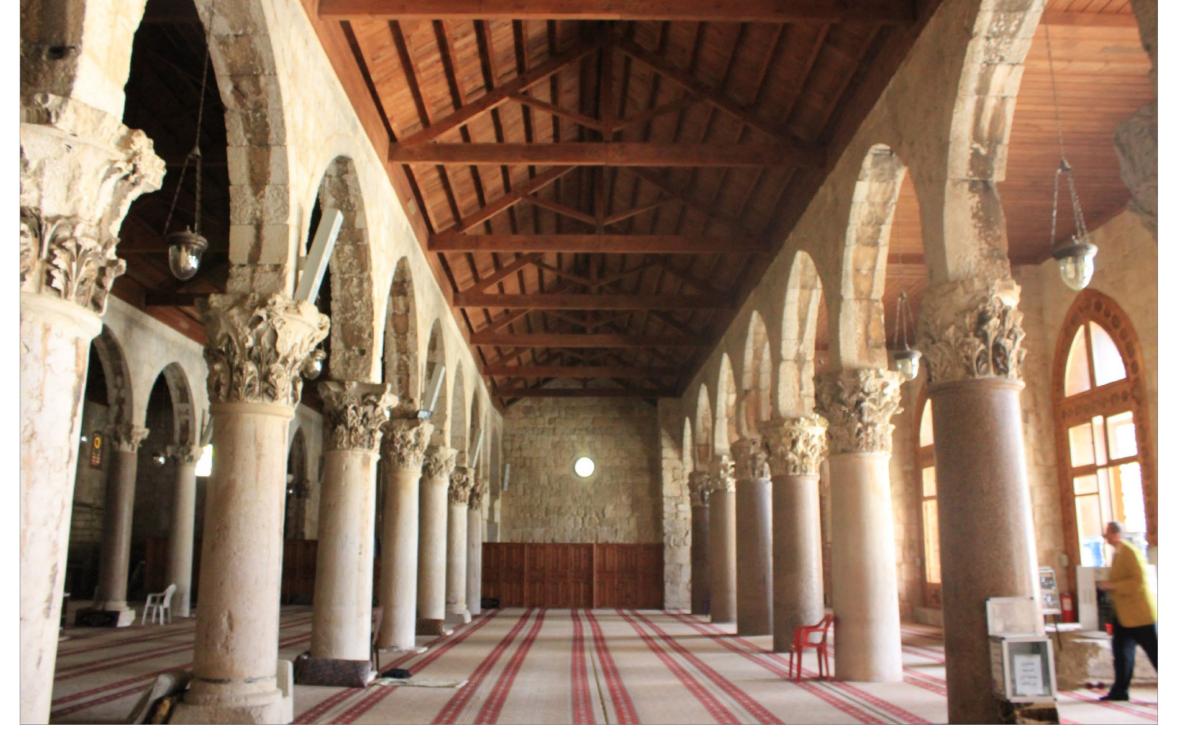
Qubbat al saiidayn: This is a two-room mausoleum built in 1410 over the tombs of Mamluk governors.



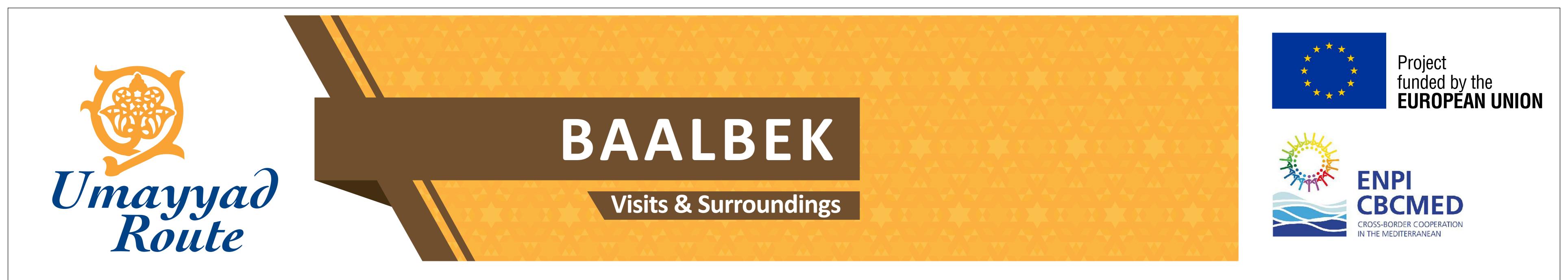


Umayyad mosques: Restored in the 90's, the 7th or 8th century Umayyad mosque was built on the site of the Roman forum, turned into the St. John Byzantine Church in the 4th-5th century, and incorporates granite and limestone columns taken from the site.













Temple of Bacchus

The complex of the Temple of Bacchus

To the south of the platform on which the complex of the temple of Jupiter is constructed, the Temple of Bacchus stands on its own lower podium. This temple was constructed in the second century, and it is better preserved than all the rest of the Roman buildings in Baalbek. Its dedication to Bacchus, or other cults associated with him may be deduced from some of its architectural decoration of grapes and poppies, carved Bacchic scenes.

The temple's podium is reached through another impressive stairway.

The temple of Venus



Temple of Venus

The Roman complexes at Baalbek were subject to earthquakes and destructions in the periods that followed the Roman era, alterations to the original structures occurred in the Byzantine, Umayyad, Abbasid, Fatimid, Ayyubid and Mamluk periods. In addition, the city witnessed several earthquakes since that time. These structures were used variously, and in the 11th and 12th century were mostly used as fortifications to defend the city and the surrounding plains. Some military structures were added in the Ayyubid period to the west of the temple of Bacchus, which gave the whole group of building the characterization of "Citadel", a term still in use today to describe the ruins of Baalbek. Other additions to the east of



Quarries

of the semicircular arches that were known in the Umayyad period. The Corinthian capitals of the columns in the interior of the mosque are evidently recycled from the roman structures nearby. The mosque was also restored recently in 2002.

On Sheikh Abdallah Hill are the remains of a mausoleum known as **Qubbat al-Amjad**, which was constructed for the Ayyubid governor of the city in the Ayyubid period, Al-Amjad, a descendent from the family of Saladin.

Several buildings were constructed in the Ottoman period. They present aspects of the Ottoman architectural style. Of these is

The third temple, the Temple of Venus, popularly known as the Round Temple, is located southeast of the Acropolis. It is an exquisite smaller temple, whose plan is distinct, with its circular cella, circular peristyle, and concave recesses in is podium. Like all other temple, it is set on a platform, with a leading stairway. It was constructed under Emperor Septimus Severus in the 3rd century AD, and in the early Byzantine period, the temple was converted into a church. It was later known by the church of Santa Barbara.

In the cliff overlooking the city, there is a necropolis that dates back to the Roman and Byzantine periods. Furthermore, remains of Roman baths are found in the city. They are in the area of Boustan al Khan, to the south of the temple complexes, along with a market and probably a bouleuterion, or assembly place.

Baalbek is also known for its **Quarries**. This has become famous because of an enormous stone block laid on the ground popularly known as the "stone of the pregnant woman." It is 21.5 meter long, meter wide and 4.2 meter deep. the temple of Bacchus still show an entrance to a building, used now as the site museum, with a Mamluk muqarnas entrance and star and polygon Mamluk geometric patterns.

Within the city of Baalbek there are other scattered remains from all periods. Northwest of the roman complexes remains of the city gate may be seen, as well as the fortification walls of the city, originally constructed in the Roman time, and reinforced and renovated in the Ayyubid and later periods. A 15th century mausoleum, known as Qubbat as-Saadin (the Cupola of the Monkeys) consists of a two-room mausoleum of a local Mamluk governor.

The Great Mosque of the city was first constructed in the Umayyad period, and several of its walls still include the original lower courses of stones. It was constructed over the Byzantine church of St. John. This mosque was restored several times, a major restoration took place in the Zingid period in the 12th century, and this is evident in the use of pointed arches in place the House of Ibrahim Haidar. This traditional Ottoman house, built by Ibrahim Bek Haidar, is today the property of the General Directorate of Antiquities.

During the early 20th century two churches were built in this area, the Orthodox Church of St. Georges and the Maronite church dedicated to the Virgin Mary.

One of the major attractions of the city is the Palmyra Hotel. It is a 20th century building constructed over the site where the Roman theater once was. Massive stones from the roman structures are still visible in the northern wall of the hotel facing the main street.

The city of Baablek is blessed with a water spring, **Ras El-Ain**, which provided drinking water for the city since antiquity. In the area of the spring there are traces of a Roman shrine and a Nymphaeum, as well as remains of a Mamluk mosque built in 1277.







NihaRomanTemplesaretwotemplesdedicated to the Canaanite goddess of fertility Atargatis (Phoenician Astarte) and the god of thunder lightning and rain, Hadaranes., and their son. It is also known for Hosn Niha, a structure of many layers the latest of which is a small a Byzantine Basilica. **Terbol Museum**, located at 32 Km from Baalbek, showcases a traditional mud-brick farmhouse in which the everyday life of farmers is depicted and old objects are displayed. The Museum opens from May to November. Nahr Al Assi (the Orontes) takes its source from Ain Al Zarqa near the town of Hermel, north of the Bekaa Valley, crosses Syria and plunges into the Turkish coast on the Mediterranean. Around Ain al Zarqa is Mgharet el Raheb that is known as Deir Mar Maroun who initiated the Maronite Christian sect.

