



Beirut (Bayrout)

Beirut is the Capital of Lebanon and its largest city. It is located on a cape almost in the middle of Lebanon's Mediterranean coast.

It is a vibrant city with many historic and contemporary attractions. It is said that from its harbor the first Umayyad caliph, Muawiya, launched his campaign against Cyprus in the seventh century. This belief is commemorated by a famous painting by Lebanese artist Moustafa Farroukh in which he depicts Muawiya oversees the naval fleet constructed for him by the Beiruties.

Beirut was a major center in many of the cultures that succeeded in ruling the eastern Mediterranean. It was a major Roman center in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century and continued to be as such in the Byzantine period, with a famous law school. The center of the city has many roman sites including the Main Street, hippodrome, temples, and baths. The center of the city continued to be inhabited over the remains of

the Roman and Byzantine building, which were mostly destroyed in an earthquake in the 6<sup>th</sup> century.

The National Museum in Beirut houses many archaeological objects from the Neolithic period to the Mamluk period in the 15<sup>th</sup> century.

Beirut kept a low profile in the following periods until the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the Ottoman period, when the Ottoman made it an independent district, and expanded its harbor, which eventually became the major part on the eastern Mediterranean coast.

The urban history of the city started in the late Ottoman Empire with modernization policy that created several monumental buildings and public squares. This continued into the French mandate period and after the independence in 1943. The city center which was severely damaged in the civil war in 1975 was restored in late 1990's. It is now a hub for commercial and entertainment outlets in addition to governmental buildings along with historic churches and mosques.

The city expanded in several directions with continuous construction. Its buildings attest to various architectural styles including late 19<sup>th</sup> century French and Italian late empire style, Ottoman Islamic revival in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, early reinforced concrete building, art deco, and modernist designs, and more recently a surge of contemporary architecture.

The city is a vibrant metropolis with several historic sites, cultural outlets, as well as an active nightlife in various locations, including downtown, Gemmayzeh, and Hamra Street areas.

Beirut is a port city par excellence, it has a street that runs along the shore, and many new hotels and restaurants flourish along that street, it is named al-Corniche. It is an excellent place for a stroll along the shore of Beirut, and it extends along the perimeter of the cape.



Various paths may be taken in the city for looking at its old monuments, especially the one from the great Serail (the seat of the prime minister now), an Ottoman military barrack in late 19<sup>th</sup> century French style, and passing by the remains of a roman bath on its slope, then to the center of the city.

methods with large dressed stone. The space of the interior was altered to accommodate the direction of Mecca on the southern side of the





#### **Al-Umari mosque**

It is in the historic center of the city, close to the rebuilt Souk (market) and the building of the House of Parliament. It has been considered the main mosque of the city since the fourteenth century. The mosque is constructed on the site of the Crusader church of Saint John the Baptist built in the 12<sup>th</sup> century to be the cathedral of the Latin bishop, Baldwin of Boulogne.

Many architectural features in the mosque are from the original church, including foundations, and the apse on the eastern side of the mosque, which is clearly visible on the exterior. The mosque was renovated and expanded in the early 1990. It has an arcade overlooking the mosque.

The plan of the original building consists of a basilican plan with the nave roofed with a pointed tunnel vault, and the aisles are roofed with cross vaults with transverse pointed and molded arches.

In various places it includes decoration from the Ottoman addition to the Mosque. The modern extension conjures up abstract Islamic geometric patterns on a long façade on the northern side of the mosque overlooking the commercial Weygand street which runs from the city port to the present location of the city's Souk. The latter was redesigned by the famous Spanish architect Raphael Moneo.

The mosque features a shrine dedicated to Prophet Yahya whose relic is in the shrine. Yahya in the Quran is St. John the Baptist in the New Testament.

Other mosques and cathedrals in the vicinity of the al-Umari Mosque are worth visiting, they vary in styles. These include: Amir Assaf mosque (16h century), Mohammad al-Amin mosque (2007), St. Georges Maronite Cathedral (1894, modeled after Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome), St. Georges Greek Orthodox Cathedral; the House of Parliament building (1932), and the Grand Serail (late 19<sup>th</sup> century). The ottoman military barracks constructed in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century serves now as the seat of the Prime

#### **National Museum**

Lebanon National Museum, located in the Mathaf area (literally museum), is a modest museum in size but it has a wonderful concise and informative collection of art objects from Lebanon, which come from various periods and from various regions in Lebanon. The building is a good example of eclectic revival style. Its porch follows a typical Ancient Egyptian temple. It was designed by Egyptian-Lebanese architect Selim Nahhas. It is constructed with stone, and was restored in the 1990's. The interior has three floors of galleries in which Phoenician objects, Ancient Egyptian, Greek, Roman and Persian sculptures are displayed. A very good collection of Roman and Byzantine mosaics also adorns the walls.

In the area of the museum there are some remarkable works of architecture including the Pine Palace, the residence of the French Ambassador, which was the seat of the French governor of Lebanon during the French

main street on its western side, which may have been the narthex of the church. The stonework on the interior shows crusader construction

Minister of Lebanon, al-Seray, overlooks Riad Solh Square and the remains of the Roman baths of the original city. Mandate, there is also the modern horse race tracks, and the University of St. Joseph, and post-modernist building,



**The Great Serail**: constructed in 1853 as an army bases in central Beirut. It currently hosts the office of Prime Minister of Lebanon. It is the most important of three Ottoman monuments on the Serial hill. The other two are the Council for development and Reconstruction and the Hamidiyyeh clock tower.



Saint Georges Maronite Cathedral: the earlier structure was built in 1755 to serve the Maronite of Beirut using Roman columns from the temple of Deir Al-Qalaa. The cathedral was built on the plan of a basilica with its nave and two lateral aisles separated by two rows of columns, the cathedral has a façade of neo-classical style.

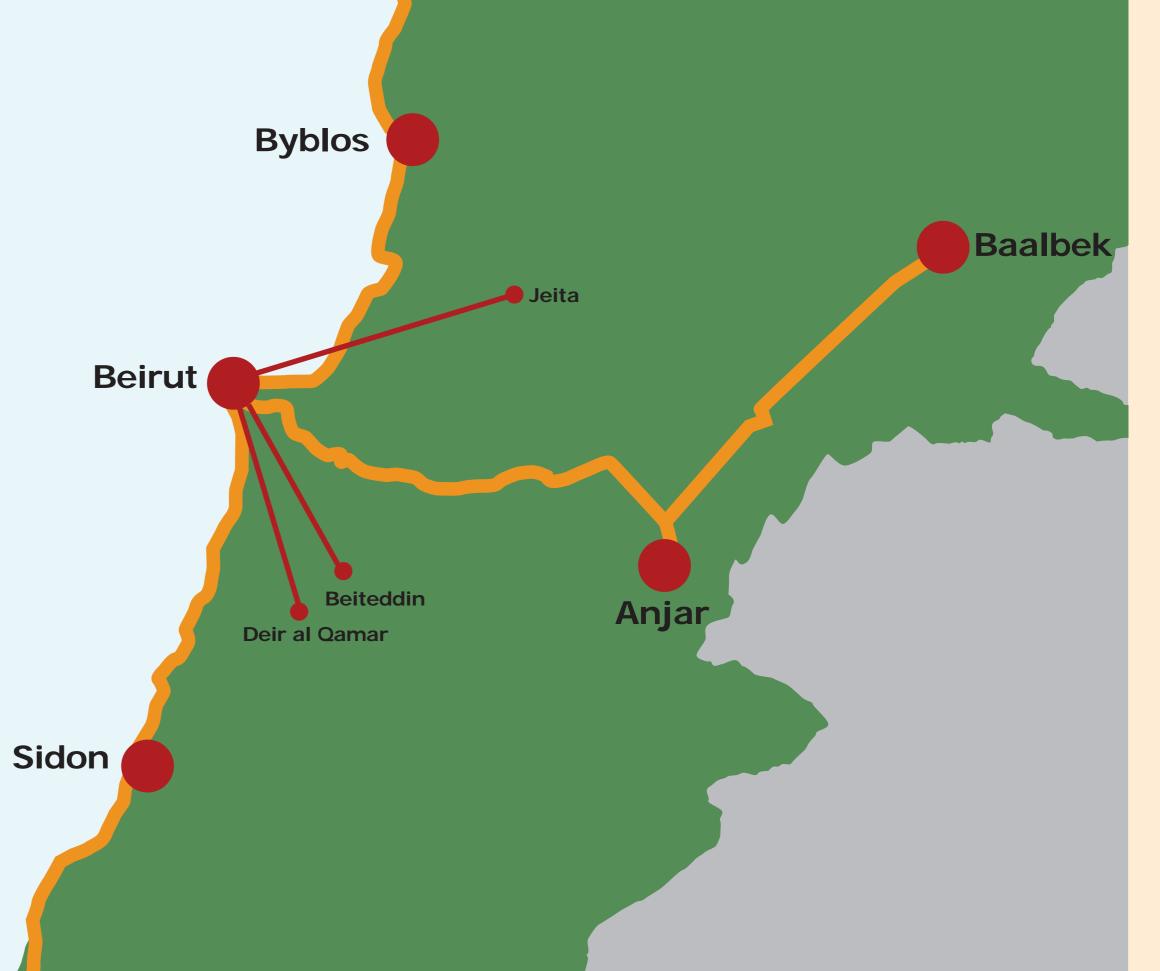


**St Georges Greek Orthodox Cathedral**: the cathedral is the oldest church in the city f Beirut, and one of the oldest in the region. The first Christian temple ever built in the very location goes back to the middle of 6<sup>th</sup> century A.D. and it's closely associated with Beirut's famous Law School. During the Lebanese civil war, the cathedral suffered many attacks of theft and vandalism. After its restoration it once again opened its doors on the 15<sup>th</sup> of December, 2003.











# BEIRUT Surroundings







## Jeita

The Jeita grotto, located at around 20 km from Beirut, was a finalist in the new 7 wonders of nature competition. You can visit two karstic limestone caves spanning an overall length of nearly 9 kilometers. The galleries are composed of a series of chambers the largest of which peaks at a height of 120 meters (390 feet).

## **Deir el Qamar and Beiteddine**

Around 40 km south from Beirut, Deir El Qamar is designated a World Heritage Site by UNESCO (1995). The small town has stonepaved streets bordered by typical Lebanese houses. The historical monuments to visit are:

- The Mamluk style Fakhreddine I Mosque
- Youssef Chehab Palace/Serail
- The Kharj Barracks: Now the French Cultural Center
- The palace of Fakhreddine II Maan: built following the khan architecture with a central courtyard surrounded by rooms
- Synagogue: On the roof of one of the wings





of the Fakhreddine II Palace, stands what was once the most important and the oldest - synagogue in the Middle-East, built in the 17<sup>th</sup> century

 Saydet al Talle: built in the 15<sup>th</sup> century on the site of an earlier Byzantine church, previously a temple dedicated to Astarte.

## **Beiteddine:**

 Emir Bachir Palace: Commissioned by Emir Bachir Chehab, the palace showcases Italian Baroque, traditional Arab, and typical 19<sup>th</sup> century architectural styles.

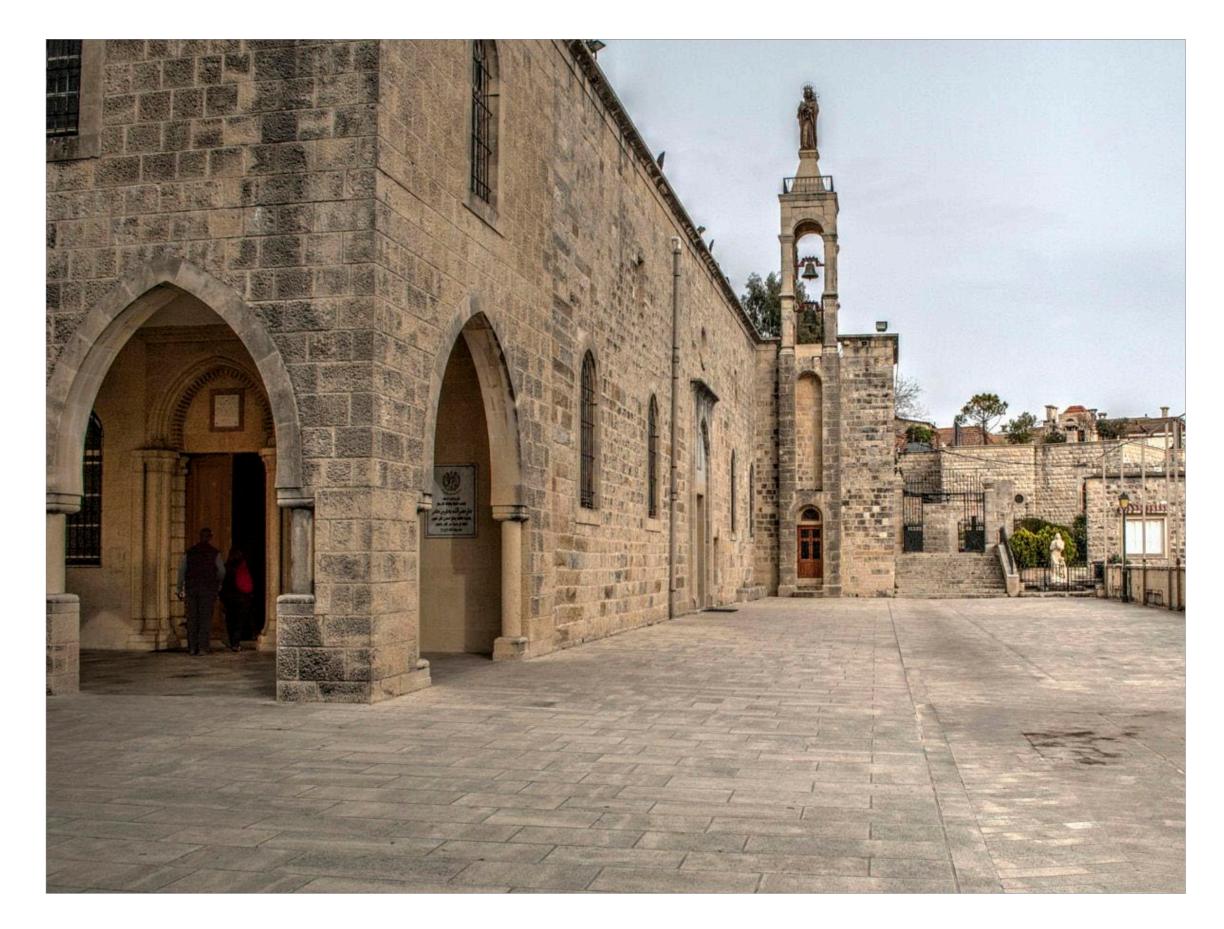
Jeita



Beiteddine







Deir EL Qamar

Saydet al Talle

