



## Byblos (Jbeil)

The renowned city of Byblos (Jbeil) is approx. 37 km north of Beirut. It has been inhabited since at least the Phoenician times. The particular history of this city and its relations with the Pharaonic Egypt of the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium BC will make its glory and reputation. Byblos and its immediate surrounding are known in Greek mythology and ancient Mediterranean history. It is also known thanks to the dissemination of the alphabet. The city, like most of the Lebanese coastal cities, witnessed successions of periods starting from the Phoenician to the modern period.

In it remains of Greek, Roman, Crusaders, and Ottoman structures are visible. The city retains an old part, and new modern parts that spread around the old market. Even though archaeological sites from the Phoenician and Roman periods are clearly identified, as well as a still standing Crusader church, the old town seems to have been shaped in the Ottoman period. Earlier centuries from the Islamic period are not clearly defined through artifacts in the city, but the old town with its narrow street and stone architecture is clearly permeated with

stones from earlier periods. The city attracted archaeological expedition since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and with the economic surge in recent years, the city is regaining a special aura, with summer festivals, long time renovation and restoration projects, and the establishment of a main university (the Lebanese American University) outside the city. The old city is also listed a World Heritage Site, whereas the modern city hosts businesses, medical and cultural centers, shopping malls, pubs and nightclubs, etc.

### Visits

The old city of Byblos has a peculiar aspect. As much as the city is famed for its role in the Mediterranean, and in relation to the interior of the eastern Mediterranean through history, it does not have monumental architecture. In addition, the stones of its Roman buildings were recycled into the buildings of the following period. This gives the city an intimate spatial rendition, yet its feels of history throughout its narrow streets, houses and the stores of its market. The harbor of the city remains pristine, perhaps as it was when the first Phoenician ship sailed from it.

The city has many small historic buildings, which include the remains of the Phoenician Temple of Baalat Gebal, the Great Temple, the necropolis which includes nine underground tombs of Byblos Kings from the second millennium BC, the Roman theater, from the 3<sup>rd</sup> century, the Roman colonnade, fourth century Roman road once led to the Temple of Baalat-Gebal and was lined with colonnades, of which only 6 remain. Since the city has been continuously inhabited most of the remains of earlier occupation are in fragments, and they are densely woven into the fabric of the present city. Among the other attractions are remains of the Bronze Age City Fortifications, the Temple of Obelisks, the Persian castle, the Roman road and Nymphem, the Crusaders castle, which was built on a Fatimid fortified structure, in the 12<sup>th</sup> century; the Medieval City Wall from the Crusaders period. From the Mamluk/Ottoman period the small mosque of Sultan Ibrahim Adham is still standing as well as the mosque of sultan Abd al-Majid which was renovated in several periods, the last of which was in 1783.



The **St. John the Baptist Church** was commissioned by the Genovese Crusaders, and built in 1115 over the remains of a Byzantine church. It was considered a cathedral and was partially destroyed during an earthquake in 1176 AD. Under ottoman authorities it became a Maronite church and was given to the Maronites as a gift by Prince Youssef Chehab of Lebanon in the mid-1700s, after they helped him capture the city. This church has a hybrid style of Byzantine, Crusader and Islamic styles. It has a basilican plan with vaulted ceiling. It is a small church with an impressive entrance and a small porch with distinct chevron pattern on its arches, similar to patters on several buildings in Jerusalem from the same period. This pattern influenced later decoration of Ayyubid and Mamluk architecture in the region.



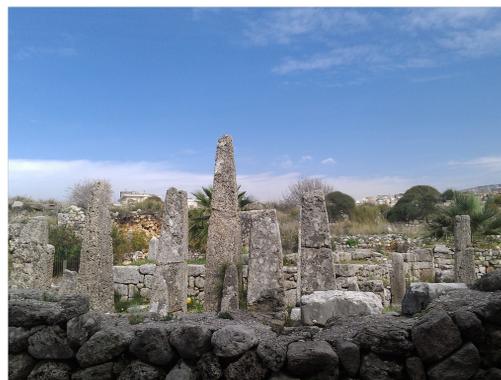
**Roman Theater:** The roman theater, which has only five tiers remaining, was built around 218 A.D. It was moved from its original site between the city gate and The Great Temple to its present location near the seaside. The black pebbles in the center of the theater mark the location of a mosaic that has been preserved in The National Museum of Beirut.



**Roman Road:** at the entrance of Byblos are the remains of the Roman road that once led to the Roman-era city of Byblos where there is the traces of the original roman paving and a series of reconstructed columns from the colonnade that once lined the road.



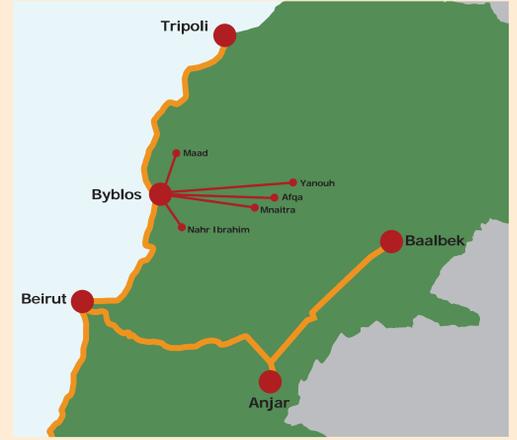
**The Crusader castle:** the site of the Crusader castle was originally occupied by an earlier fortification dating from the Fatimid period (969-1169 A.D.). In the beginning of the 12<sup>th</sup> century A.D., the Crusaders build a strong fortress, reusing Roman stonework from the site and cutting new stones to match the old ones. The castle consisted of a courtyard, an enclosure with four towers at each corner of the building, and a fifth tower in the middle of the north wall to defend the entrance. The whole castle was originally surrounded by a moat. In Mamluke and Ottoman times, the castle was reused and some parts of it were restored.



**The Temple of the Obelisks:** originally built on top of the "L-shaped temple", the remains of the temple of the Obelisks were moved by archeologists to their present location. The temple dates from the Late Bronze Age (1600-1200 B.C.). The many small obelisks found in this temple were used as religious offerings. Altogether, over 1306 offerings have been uncovered in this temple, including human figures made of bronze covered with gold leaf.



**Sultan Abd El Majid:** the Ottoman-era mosque is thought to have been built on the site of an older mosque. The structure dates from 1648 and was renovated in 1783 by Emir Youssef Chehab, yet it carries the name of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Ottoman Sultan Abdel Majid. The Mosque of Sultan Abd El Majid is located within the edieval city walls, just outside the archeological site.



### Surroundings

The mountains and valleys west of Byblos are superb. The reputation of some of them is rooted in Greek and Roman mythology, such as the valley of Adonis, where a Roman aqueduct attests to its importance. Approximately 14 kilometers from Byblos, **Nahr Ibrahim**, formerly called Adonis River, is rich with legends. According to Greek and Phoenician mythology, Adonis, God of Love and Beauty, was killed by a boar sent by Ares, god of War. His blood flowed into the waters of the river, which was named after him. Just off the seaside road, 6 kilometers south of Byblos, there is a 19<sup>th</sup> century Ottoman bridge that allows access over the river. Going further inland from this road, you will arrive at the Valley of the ancient Adonis River where Zoubeida's Roman aqueduct still stands. It was restored during the reign of the Emir Bashir Shehab (first half 19<sup>th</sup> century), and is suspended over the valley.

Furthermore, the area of **Maad**, at approximately 20 kilometers from Byblos, there is the 12<sup>th</sup> century St. Charbel church, dedicated to Saint Charbel of Edessa, who converted and was martyred with his sister in the middle of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD. It is built on the foundations of a Byzantine church,

itself constructed on the remains of a Roman temple. The church features Byzantine-style paintings dating back to the crusaders, as well as the only crusader tomb in Lebanon and some Roman elements found onsite.

40 kilometers upward from Byblos the area of **Afqa** shelters a renowned temple devoted to Adonis and Astarte, destroyed in the 4<sup>th</sup> century under Emperor Constantine's orders, only to become a Christian pilgrimage site over the centuries, dedicated to the Virgin Mary.

The road passing through the hinterland of Jbeil towards **Mnaitra** arrives to **Yanouh**, at around 30 kilometers east from Byblos. This peaceful village has a very tumultuous history, evidenced by the various ruins that stand there. The Archaeological site named Kharayeb buried the remains of the Bronze Age until the Ottoman period. On the main road stands a temple built in Roman times and abandoned at the end of this same period, at its side a Christian basilica was founded at the beginning of the Early Byzantine period. In the 12<sup>th</sup> century, the **Yanouh** site will be turned into the Seat of the Maronite Patriarchate. At that time, the Roman temple was transformed into a church, hence

its designation of the name "Saint George the Blue." In the vicinity of the temple are found ten churches, a witness of a glorious past.

**Mnaitra** is seven kilometers south from **Yanouh**, where are found the ruins of a medieval fortress called El Hoson. It is an obligatory passage to the Bekaa. This fortress controlled a natural path which allowed linking **Mnaitra** to the Bekaa, the reason why the site was repeatedly controlled by the Arab and the Crusaders. Starting 1176, it is dominated by the Count of Tripoli. The visitor can admire the various Hellenistic, Roman and Crusade ruins of the site.



Afqa



yanouh



Maad - St. Charbel Church



Nahr Ibrahim

