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**THE MAIN PHOENICIAN CITIES IN LEBANON
AND
THEIR EXPANSION INTO THE WESTERN MEDITERRANEAN**

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<https://www.coe.int/en/web/cultural-routes/the-phoenicians-route>

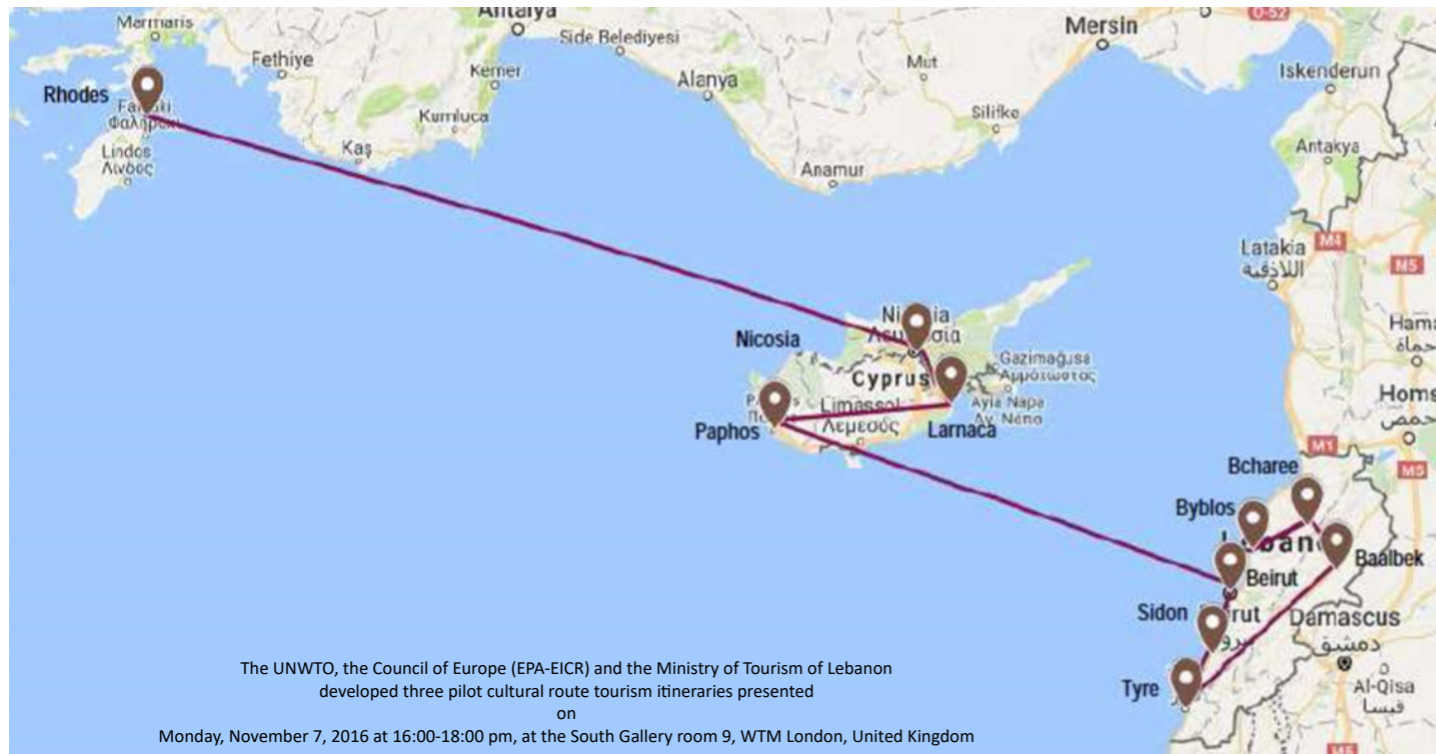
<http://fenici.net/en/on-the-route-eng/>

<http://fenici.net/en/?s=lebanon>

<https://lcf.lau.edu.lb/images/smart-ways-lebanon-by-the-phoenicians-route.pdf>



Lebanon, a country situated at the crossroads of the East and the West, has a rich history that has been profoundly influenced by its strategic location as the gateway to the Middle East. At the heart of this historical tapestry lies the Phoenician civilization, whose legacy continues to captivate the imagination of historians, archaeologists, and travelers alike. This article delves into the main Phoenician cities in Lebanon and their expansion into the western Mediterranean, shedding light on the enduring legacy of this ancient seafaring people.



The Main Phoenician Cities in Lebanon and their expansion into the Western Mediterranean

The Phoenician civilization, centered in the main cities of Lebanon, notably Tyre, Sidon, Byblos, and others, played a pivotal role in the ancient Mediterranean. Their maritime expertise and trading networks established these cities as thriving hubs of commerce, culture, and seafaring. The Phoenician expansion into the Western Mediterranean, marked by prominent colonies like Carthage, Gadir (Cadiz), and Utica, facilitated the spread of Phoenician influence. These colonies not only extended Phoenician trade but also promoted cultural exchanges and the diffusion of the Phoenician alphabet. While these Western Mediterranean colonies are well-documented, there are also tantalizing hints of Phoenician exploration into the Atlantic, raising questions about their potential voyages to the Americas. The legacy of these Lebanese Phoenician cities, with their impressive seafaring capabilities, continues to intrigue historians and remains a vital part of Mediterranean and world history.

The Phoenicians were not confined to Lebanon's coastal cities. They ventured into the rugged terrain of the Lebanon Mountains and into the Beqaa Valley. Here, they established the city of Baalbek, which served as a significant inland trade center. The Beqaa region, with its fertile lands, was essential for sustaining the Phoenician civilization and its economic activities.

The early Phoenicians established their roots in the city of Byblos, which served as the cradle of their unique society. As their civilization blossomed, they founded several key cities along the coastline of Lebanon, each playing a pivotal role in their maritime and trade-based culture:

- 1. Tripoli:** Situated in northern Lebanon, Tripoli became a major Phoenician port, connecting their civilization to the wider Mediterranean world.
- 2. Anfeh:** Is among the coastal Phoenician cities and towns that still exist today in Lebanon.
- 3. Batroun:** This coastal town in northern Lebanon was known for its ancient maritime activities and trade connections.
- 4. Byblos:** As one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world, Byblos holds a special place in Phoenician history. It was a center of trade and culture, contributing to the spread of the Phoenician alphabet.
- 5. Jounieh:** This picturesque coastal town played a role in the Phoenician maritime endeavors, serving as a stopover for their ships.
- 6. Beirut:** The modern capital of Lebanon was once a Phoenician settlement, boasting a history rich in trade and maritime activities.
- 7. Sidon:** Renowned for its purple dye production, Sidon was a major Phoenician city that contributed to the wealth and influence of the civilization.
- 8. Tyre:** Perhaps the most famous of all Phoenician cities, Tyre became a powerful maritime city-state, playing a central role in the Mediterranean trade network.
- 9. Baalbek:** While not situated on the coast, Baalbek was a remarkable Phoenician city in the heart of the Lebanon Mountains. It served as an inland trading hub and is known for its impressive Roman ruins.

Overview of Phoenician colonies in the Western Mediterranean and their potential connections to the Americas: Western Mediterranean Phoenician Colonies:

- 1. Carthage:** Carthage, located in modern-day Tunisia, was one of the most powerful Phoenician colonies. It grew into a major maritime and trading power in the Western Mediterranean, establishing a formidable empire. Carthage played a central role in the Phoenician expansion in this region.
- 2. Gadir (Cadiz):** Situated on the southern coast of modern Spain, [Gadir was a key Phoenician colony](http://cf.lau.edu.lb/activities/projects/phoenician-route.php), serving as a bridge between the Phoenician homeland and the Iberian Peninsula. It facilitated trade and cultural exchanges between the Phoenicians and the indigenous peoples of the Iberian Peninsula.
- 3. Utica:** Another significant Phoenician colony, Utica, was located in modern Tunisia. It had close ties to Carthage and contributed to the Phoenician presence in North Africa.

<http://cf.lau.edu.lb/activities/projects/phoenician-route.php>



The city of Gadir is one of the oldest Phoenician settlements in the West. Already in the first quarter of the first millennium BC, the first tentative arrivals by the Phoenicians of Tiro took place, founding a stable colony on a date that until the discoveries found under the Puppet Theater.

TRIPOLI



TRIPOLI, founded by the Phoenicians around 800 BC is today the second largest city and main port in Lebanon. Like Beirut, the city witnessed the presence of various Mediterranean cultures and empires including the Canaanites/Phoenicians, Persians, Greeks, Romans, Byzantines, Umayyad, Abbasid, Crusaders, Ayyubid, Mamluks, Ottoman and French.

Facing the shores of the city there are the Palm Islands, which known for its green turtles, and which was declared a Protected Nature Reserve by the UNESCO in 1992.

Attractions in the area of Tripoli: Becharri, Wadi Qadish, Menjez and Arqa



Becharri is a town to the east of Tripoli, and it is in the area where the infamous cedar Forest of Lebanon are located. These forests known from the Bible to the Ottoman period as a major source for woods to construct large audience halls in antiquities, and which were essential to forge good relations between Ancient Egypt and the city of Byblos.



Wadi Qadisha is a valley known for being a sacred destination where one can visit several monasteries carved into the sides of its rocky hills. Wadi Qadisha (the Holy Valley) and the Forest of the Cedars heritage sites are inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List (1998).



Menjez has an exceptional archaeological heritage site in Lebanon and includes a Roman basalt temple called Maqam Er Rabb or Beit Jaalouk, the only basalt in Lebanon.



Arqa (Phoenician: Irqata; 'Arqat in the Bible) is a village near Miniara in Akkar Governorate, Lebanon, 22 km northeast of Tripoli, near the coast. The former bishopric became a double Catholic titular see (Latin and Maronite). The Roman Emperor Alexander Severus was born there. It is significant for the Tell Arqa, an archaeological site that goes back to Neolithic times, and during the Crusades there was a strategically significant castle.

ANFEH



ANFEH is a town in the Koura district of the North Governorate of Lebanon. It is located 13.5 km north of Batroun and 15 km south of Tripoli. It is among the coastal Phoenician cities and towns that still exist today in Lebanon.

Prior to the recent excavation, Anfeh was thought to have been founded around 1300 BC, but the pottery, which dates to 3200 BC, provides compelling evidence that the town was once a much older and significant city in antiquity.

The remains of these civilizations include Phoenician and Roman walls, wine presses, mosaics, places of worship, caves, water tanks, and steps. A wide area of Anfeh and its surroundings are covered with salines, and the production of sea salt, "white gold," is a staple of the local economy.

<https://www.the961.com/anfeh-lebanon-photos/>

Attraction in the area of Anfeh : Amioun Convent and Lady of Nourieh



Amioun is a very old settlement whose history can be traced back to the Paleolithic period. This is supported by the number of small caves built in the old city's rocks. The ancient Semitic peoples are thought to have arrived in the region around 4000 BC. Saint John "Al-Sheer" is a church perched on the rocky cliff over a number of vaults in the southeastern facade of the cliff.



Lady of Nourieh, *Saydet el Nourieh* in Arabic, is a Marian shrine in Hamat, Lebanon. Nourieh is a derivative of the Arabic word, *Nour*, meaning light. Thus, in English, the Marian shrine can be called the Lady of Light.

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BATROUN



BATROUN, derived from the Greek Botrys, was founded by the Phoenicians on the southern side of the promontory called Theoprosopon (*Râs ach-Chaq'a*) in Antiquity, and Cape Lithoprosopon during the Byzantine Empire. The city was under Roman rule to Phoenice Prima province and later, after the region was Christianized, became a suffragan of the Patriarchate of Antioch.

Attractions in the area of Batroun: The Mseilha Fort and Smar Jbeil Castle .



The Mseilha Fort is a fortification situated 5.5 km north of the city of Batroun. The current fort was built by Emir Fakhreddine II in the 17th century to guard the route from Tripoli to Beirut. Resting on a long, narrow limestone rock near the Nahr el-Jawz River, its walls are constructed with small sandstone blocks quarried from the nearby coast and built onto the edge of the rock.



Smar Jbeil is a small agglomeration situated in the region of Batroun in North Lebanon at an altitude of 500m, between Rashana and Douma. The name is of Phoenician origin and means Guardian of Jbeil. One of the most ancient towns in Lebanon, Smar Jbeil has a Phoenician citadel which was used by the Romans, who left inscriptions on the northern wall. The Crusaders, for their part, built basements around its two towers and a church on the side facing north. Wells and deep underground galleries were also dug in the living rock.

BYBLOS



JBEIL (Ancient Byblos) is known for its historical port that hosted the trade between Ancient Egypt and the Eastern Mediterranean. Byblos is considered one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world and, according to the Phoenician writer Sanchuniathon, the first city of the Phoenicians.

<https://lcf.lau.edu.lb/foundation/byblos.php>

Today, it is a typical Middle Eastern city (with its enchanting souq and Medieval port near the Phoenician port) visited mainly for its archaeological area, accessible through a castle built in the 12th century with stone blocks retrieved from Roman buildings. It preserves the remains of the ancient Amorite city, the famous Temple of Obelisks of the Phoenician era and a Roman amphitheater.

[The Alphabet Museum](#) is an interactive venue that uses advanced audio-visual techniques (including virtual- and augmented-reality), as well as rare historical exhibits to take the visitor on a journey of discovery through history, geography, culture, art and civilization.

Byblos is a heritage site inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List (1984).

“EDUCATION IS AT THE CORE OF THE [LAU-CARDAHI FOUNDATION’S MISSION](#)”. [Phoenician Route, Phoenician Architect](#)

The foundation welcomes researchers, students and all visitors who wish to learn more about Byblos over the centuries and relevant topics on Lebanon. Our interactive workshops and lectures on historical, archeological, architectural, and urban studies of Byblos and other heritage cities in Lebanon and the broader region, combined with our art exhibitions – featuring paintings, photography, sculpture, cultural artefacts and international competitions – bring Byblos City to life. Anyone who comes through our doors, whether on a visit or for a workshop, will benefit from our digital library, [digital museum](#) and [artifact room](#).



JOUNIEH



During the Phoenician period, the bay of **JOUNIEH** was an important winter shelter for ships sailing from the south to Byblos; hence its name Palaebyblus (literary before Byblos). It is mentioned in the geography described by the Greek historian, Strabo.

<http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/44884>

Nowadays, Jounieh is a main coastal city between Beirut and Byblos. It is known for its seaside resorts, the Casino du Liban, the Ottoman and French Colonial Old Souq in the center of the city, and the Shrine of Our Lady of Lebanon as a main religious tourist destination.

The Municipality of Jounieh, as active member of the Phoenicians' Route, donated a historical building in the old souk of Jounieh that will be transformed into a [Phoenicians' Route Museum](#)

Jounieh may also serve as additional attractions for both Beirut and Byblos.

Attractions in the area of Jounieh: The Shrine of Our Lady of Lebanon, Jeita and Nahr Al-Kalb.



The Shrine of Our Lady of Lebanon draws millions of believers, both Christian and Muslim, from all over the world. The 50th jubilee in 1954 was also the 100th anniversary of the establishment of the Catholic dogma of the Immaculate Conception. During these celebrations, Pope Pius XII sent his representative, Cardinal Angelo Roncalli (later to become Pope John XXIII) to Lebanon. Pope John Paul II visited Our Lady of Lebanon in 1997.



Jabal Moussa, where recent excavations were discovered, is one of the very few sites in Lebanon that exist in mountainous areas (hinterland heritage) and was inhabited during the Canaanite/Phoenician, Bronze Age, Medieval and Ottoman periods. The area is managed by Jabal Moussa-UNESCO Biosphere Nature Reserve.

- [The first High Mountain Phoenician center at Jabal Moussa Biosphere Reserve- Mchati](#)

- [CROSSDEV celebrates the new High Mountain Phoenician center in Lebanon](#)



Nahr Al-Kalb is the ancient Lycus River. Past generals and conquerors have traditionally built monuments at the mouth of the river, known as the commemorative stelae of Nahr el-Kalb. In 2005, the stelae were listed in the UNESCO Memory of the World initiative.

BEIRUT



BEIRUT, the capital and the largest city of Lebanon, has hosted successive historic periods of major powers and civilizations in the Mediterranean and West Asia. It has layers of Phoenician, Roman, Byzantine, Mamluk, Ottoman and French mandate periods. Today's archaeological highlights include a Phoenician port, several Roman remains of a hippodrome, baths and temples.

Museums in Beirut:

- [Beirut National Museum](#)
- [Beirut National Library](#)
- [AUB Archaeological Museum](#)
- [Lebanese Prehistoric Museum](#)
- [Sursock Palace/Sursock Museum](#)

Attractions in the area of Beirut: Deir El Qamar and Beiteddine, The Beit Mery Ruins and Barouk



Deir El Qamar and Beiteddine are known for the Mamluk-inspired Fakhreddine Mosque, the Yousef Chehab Palace, the Kharj Barracks, the Palace of Fakhreddine II Ma'ani, its Synagogue, Saydet el Talle Church and the Emir Bashir Palace. Rmeileh and Jiyeh are known for their beautiful sandy beach resorts.



The Beit Mery Ruins is a site rich with ancient Roman and Byzantine remains, as well as the historic Maronite Monastery of Saint John the Baptist which was built in 1750. Phoenician and Roman temples were erected in this same general area in what is now known as Deir El-Qala'a.



Barouk is a village in the Chouf District of Lebanon. Historically, the village is known for being the "land of good," by virtue of its fountain (Nabeh-el-Barouk). Barouk is crowned by its mountain Jabal el Barouk that stands at 1943 m above sea level. The mountain also has the largest natural reserve in Lebanon, the Al Shouf Cedar Nature Reserve, and boasts the oldest and most elegant cedar forest in Lebanon, the Cedrus Libani.

SIDON



SIDON, south of Beirut, is known for its multi-layered sea citadel. Founded in the fourth millennium BC, it is one of three major port city-states of the Canaanite/Phoenician epoch, cited 35 times in the Old Testament. In its long history, it has been home to the Phoenicians, Greeks, Romans, Arabs, Crusaders, Mamluks and Ottomans.

Attractions in the area of Sidon: Echmoun, Maghdouche, the Beaufort Castle and Chhim



Echmoun, a Phoenician temple dedicated to the god of healing (hence the name), is located at the entrance of Sidon. It is considered one of the best-preserved Phoenician temples in Lebanon.



Maghdouche is known for Our Lady of the Guard Church containing a grotto, where it is believed the Virgin Mary stayed while Jesus visited the surrounding cities of the south.



Beaufort Castle is located 40 km from Sidon on an escarpment of almost 1000 meters above the valley. The castle was built as a defensive and strategic post for the Crusaders. Consecutively used by the Ayyubids, the Mamluks and Emir Fakhreddine, it was later restored during the French mandate following an earthquake.

https://www.tripadvisor.com/Attraction_Review-g5606246-d4076392-Reviews-Beaufort_Castle-Arnoun_Nabatieh_Governorate.html



Chhim has several landmarks around it such as the Temple of Eshmun, an ancient place of worship dedicated to Eshmun, the Phoenician god of healing. It is located near the Awali river. The site was occupied from the 7th century BCE to the 8th century CE, suggesting an integrated relationship with the nearby city of Sidon.

TYRE



Built around 2700 BC, **TYRE** is the home of Elissar, the Phoenician princess who founded Carthage, as well as the home of Europa who was abducted by Zeus disguised as a white bull.

Two main archeological sites – Al Bass and Al Mina – are testimony to its historical significance. Tyre was originally made up of two settlements, one on the mainland and the other on an island, which were connected by a causeway. In Tyre, the remains of the Hellenistic and Roman city – a triumphal arch, a hippodrome and paved streets – are well preserved. The paved road passes under the imposing triumphal arch to the hippodrome, which can hold up to 20,000 spectators. Tyre is a heritage site inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List (1984).

Attractions in the area of Tyre: On the way between Sidon and Tyre there is Sarafand (Phoenician Sarepta), the Citadel of Tebnine, Umm Al-Amad and Qana.



Sarafand (Sarepta), is a major Phoenician site located between Sidon and Tyre. It is now a fishing town and a touristic attraction because of its restaurants. The site was well studied and excavated from 1969-1974 by the University Museum of the University of Pennsylvania. Some of the finds are housed in the National Museum of Beirut.



The Citadel of Tebnine (Toron) is a Crusader Castle built in 1105. The fortress witnessed many battles throughout its history.



Located on the eastern shoulder of the Naqoura Sea in South Lebanon, **Umm Al-Amad** encompasses layers of tangible Greek civilization artifacts. Although it was discovered by a French explorer in 1772, it was not excavated until 1861. The city of more than 60,000 square meters still bears witness to an important historical period and tells of architectural art and precision in engraving and sculpture with tools dating back to the Iron Age, so named after the discovery of iron nearly 3,000 years ago. Umm Al-Amad's two temples were built roughly between 287 and 222 BC.



Qana (Cana), located at 13 km from Tyre. It is believed that this is the village where Jesus performed his first miracle, turning water into wine.

BAALBEK



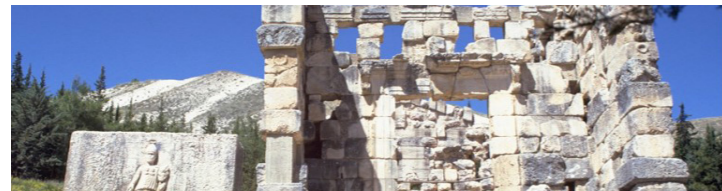
Founded by the Phoenicians, **BAALBEK** was later conquered by the Macedonians who called it Heliopolis (always the City of the Sun) for assimilation between the Sun god and the Phoenician divinity Baal. It later became a Roman colony under Augustus, preserving the new name. Today you can see three main buildings: the Temple of Jupiter, the Temple of Bacchus and the circular Temple of Venus. A fourth monument, the Temple of Mercury, is located on the hill of Sheikh Abdallah. In July and August, the International Baalbek Festival hosts leading international, regional and local performers and musicians.

Baalbek is a heritage site inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List (1984).

Attractions in the area of Baalbek: Anjar, Niha, Kamid Al Lawz, Mount Hermon/Rashaya and Ferzoul



Anjar was founded by Caliph Walid Ibn 'Abd al-Malak around 705 AD. The Umayyads built it and turned it into an important commercial center as it linked Damascus, Homs, Baalbek and the Palestinian plains. It shined for only 20 to 30 years. Anjar displays a good example of early Islamic architecture and its influence by Roman-Byzantine architecture. This is clearly visible in the various construction techniques and decorations in the city. Anjar is a heritage site inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List (1984).



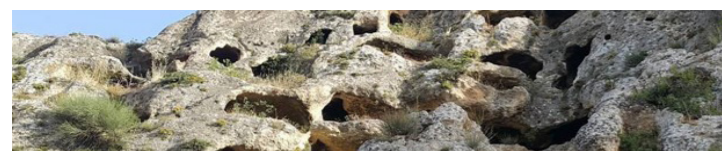
Niha Roman Temples are two temples dedicated to the Canaanite goddess of fertility Atargatis (Phoenician Astarte), the god of thunder, lightning and rain Hadaranes, and their son. It is also known for Hosn Niha, a structure of many layers the latest of which is a small Byzantine Basilica.



Kamid Al Lawz is one of the most important sites in Lebanon where archaeologists found and recorded many spectacular buildings, which are significant to the history of the region. Paleolithic material was found alongside Heavy Neolithic through to the late Neolithic period, and evidence suggests that it became a seat of state in the Bronze Age until the Byzantine era. A German team from the University of Freiburg has conducted more recent excavations and studies.



Mount Hermon/Rashaya region is a significant cultural heritage site in the eastern mountain terrain. The temples which circled Hermon were oriented to the cone-shaped tip of Kasr es-Sebayb, the highest point of the mountain and the site of a sacred enclosure in Roman and pre-Roman time. The temples which circle Hermon are, from the south: Hebbariya, Ain Harsha, Ain Libbaya, Nebi Safa, Akbeh, Aiha, Beka, Khirbet el-Knese, Yanta, Deir el-Ashayr, Rahle, Burkush, and Er-Rime.



Ferzoul, there are many caves on a hill in the north-east of the village in the time of the Byzantines, they were transformed into hermitages for the anchorites; a whole region is known as the plural: The caves of the hermits.

PHOENICIAN EXPLORATION INTO THE ATLANTIC AND THE AMERICAS

While it's challenging to conclusively prove that the Phoenicians reached the Americas, their influence and legacy in the Western Mediterranean and North Africa are well-documented. The possibility of their exploration into the Atlantic and the Americas remains an intriguing aspect of ancient history that continues to be researched and debated.

The legacy of the Phoenician civilization in Lebanon is a testament to the enduring impact of this ancient culture. Their pioneering contributions to trade, maritime navigation, and the development of the alphabet continue to shape our understanding of the ancient world. The main Phoenician cities in Lebanon, with their rich history and cultural significance, provide a glimpse into a society that thrived for over a millennium and left an indelible mark on the Mediterranean and the world.

Lebanon's position as the homeland of the Phoenicians and its essential role in EuroMediterranean culture, along with its active partnership in the Phoenicians' route and participation in the cultural routes of the Council of Europe, including its accession as a member state to the enlarged partial agreement, has been instrumental in enriching and expanding the Phoenician intercultural dialogue and connectivity. This has made significant contributions to enhancing the cultural tourism sector among the main Phoenician cities in Lebanon and their expansion into the Western Mediterranean. Lebanon's unique status as the Phoenicians' historical heartland has allowed it to serve as a living testament to this ancient civilization's legacy. By actively participating in the Phoenicians' route and the cultural routes of the Council of Europe, Lebanon has reinforced its commitment to preserving and promoting this rich heritage.

Lebanon accession to the enlarged partial agreement with 40 member states amplifies the scope of this intercultural dialogue and fosters stronger connections between nations. This collaboration not only celebrates the shared Phoenician past but also encourages cross-cultural exchanges, bringing together people from diverse backgrounds.

As a result of our Euro-Mediterranean intercultural dialogue and collaboration, the cultural tourism sector has thrived in the main Phoenician cities of Lebanon and their colonies in the Western Mediterranean. Tourists and travelers are drawn to the region to explore its rich history, visit archaeological sites, and engage in cultural events. This dynamic interplay of historical preservation and modern tourism has not only benefited Lebanon but has also fostered a deeper appreciation of the Phoenician heritage across the Euro-Mediterranean region.



© Philip Beale

[Replica of a 2000-year-old boat makes landfall in Florida after 6,000-mile journey across the Atlantic for #CleanSeas](#)

The Phoenicia trawled through the ocean, collecting microplastics, as it travelled from Carthage, Tunisia through to Cadiz (Spain), Essaouira (Morocco), Tenerife (Canary Islands) and Santo Domingo (Dominican Republic) before finally arriving in Fort Lauderdale, Florida on 4 February 2020.