

Damascus

The Capital of the Ummiah with Roman Heritage

Damascus-Islamic Tourism

Syria has a rich, ancient history: it is home to the famous pre-Islamic city state of Palmyra and the Umayyad dynasty that ruled thereafter. Before Islam, the Romans enjoyed a long presence in the country located on the historical trade route between Asia and Europe which has a special importance for Muslims. The Holy Prophet Muhammad was involved in trade here before the Final Message was revealed to him by God. The Quraysh tribe, to which the Prophet belonged traded with Syria and it is from Roman Syria that they imported various idols which were worshipped before they embraced Islam. The world generally knew Damascus for its famous fabrics and other products.

Syria lives in the dreams of Arab poets as the land of the Euphrates, with a rich and varied past that incorporates Roman, Christian and Islamic civilizations. Thus, people of different religious backgrounds and interests will all be attracted to the country. Touring Syria is a veritable test for the mind, knowledge and imagination. There is so much to see, do and experience.

Damascus

Damascus is one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world famous for its contributions to science, culture, politics, art, commerce, and industry from earliest times. It has been called al-Fayha (The Fragrant City), al-Sham, Jolraq, and 'Pearl of the Orient' (an epithet from the Roman Emperor, Julian). It enjoyed great prominence during the Second Millennium BC as the centre of an Aramaic kingdom known as Dar Misiq (lit. Irrigated House). Damascus became the capital of the first Arab state of the Umayyad dynasty in 661CE.

Landmarks of Old Damascus

The Wall of Damascus was built in the Roman era with large, tapered stones. It



The Ummawi Mosque.

المسجد الأموي.

was originally oblong and designed in the style of Roman military camps, cities, and fortifications. It has seven gates: Bab Sharqi, Bab al-Jabieh, Bab Keissan, Bab al-Saghir, Bab Tuma, Bab al-Jeniq, and Bab al-Faradiss. The main thoroughfare traversed the city from Bab al-Jabieh to Bab Sharqi; on both sides were Corinthian columns and the city was traversed by numerous triumphal arches.

The Umayyad Mosque

This great mosque stands at the heart of the Old City at the end of Souq al-Hamidiyeh. It was built by the Umayyad Caliph, al-Walid ibn Abd al-Malik, in 705CE, who negotiated its construction with the Christian community of Damascus, agreeing to build a new church (St John's) in compensation. He also allocated several pieces of land for other churches on the condition that they relinquished their right to part of the mosque. It took ten years, eleven million gold dinars and the labour of hundreds of masons, artists, builders, carpenters, marble-layers and painters to complete. The Citadel is the only fortress in Syria built on the same level as the city. It was erected by the Seljuks in 1078CE.

Souq al-Hamidiyeh dates back to ➤



The children of the neighbourhood.

أولاد وبنات الحارة.

1863, to the rule of the Ottoman Sultan Abdul-Hamid.

Souq Midhat Pasha: (aka. The Long Souq) was founded by the Governor of Damascus, Midhat Pasha, in 1078. It stands above the Roman 'Straight Street' which used to traverse the city. Souq al-Harir was founded by Darwish Pasha in 1574. Its shops are filled with local embroidered cloths, perfumes and tailors' requirements.

Souq al-Bzourieh: extends between Souq Midhat Pasha and the Umayyad Mosque. It is famous for its quaint little markets selling fruits, medicinal herbs, and confectionery. In the middle of this souq stands a bath which has been in continuous use from the 12th Century. The National Museum boasts of thousands of statues, stamps, pieces of jewelry, weaponry, precious stones, sculptures, masks, tablets, textiles, mosaics, glasswork and earthenware, coins, and manuscripts from the ancient Syrian kingdoms of Ebla, Ugarit, Palmyra, Tel Sukas, Mari, Doura Europos, Bosra, Shahba etc.

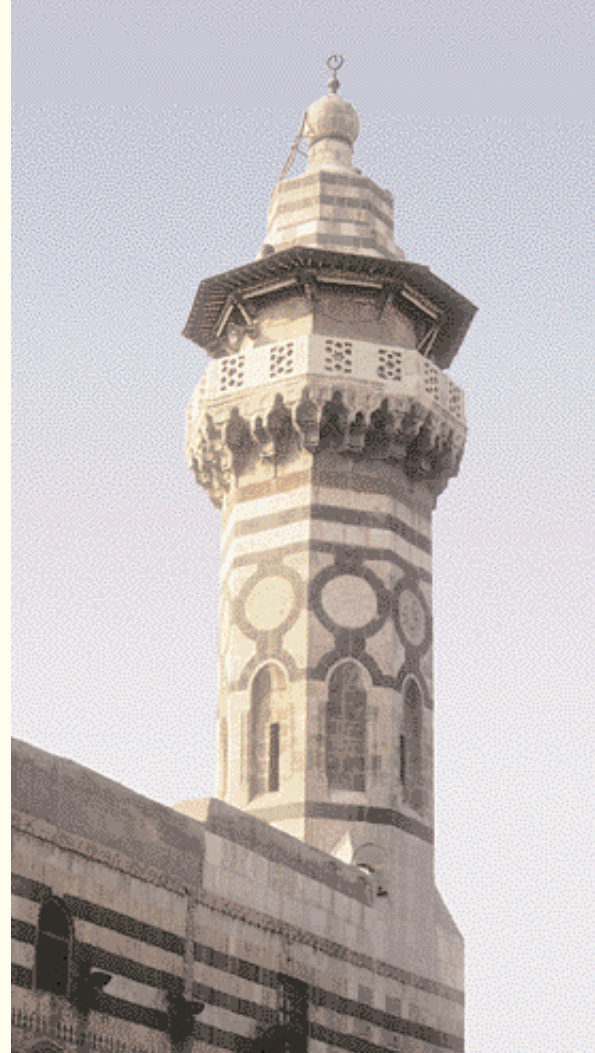
Al-Takieh al-Sulaymaniyeh is a remarkable example of Ottoman architecture built by order

of Sultan Sulayman al-Qanouni in 1554 on the site of the famous palace of Zaher Bybars, and designed by the celebrated architect Sinan. Most striking are its two elegant minarets.

The City of Damascus Historical Museum is an 18th Century building, which, like al-Azem Palace, is considered a fine example of old Damascene house architecture.

Al-Salhieh at the foot of Mount Qassiun overlooks Damascus. Building in this area started in the 11th Century to accommodate refugees arriving from Jerusalem following the Crusader occupation of the city. Here you will find numerous old schools and hospitals, as well as mosques and the shrines of prominent Muslim thinkers and Sufi leaders such as Muhyeddin ibn Arabi and Abd al-Ghani al-Nabulsi.

Shrine of Sayyeda Zaynab is some 10km to the south of Damascus. The interior is covered with decorations in silver and gold, ornate windows and lavish chandeliers. The shrine attracts hundreds of pilgrims daily from various countries, who come to pay tribute to the Holy Prophet's grand-daughter, the daughter of Imam Ali ibn Abi Taleb. ■



A Damascus minaret.

منارة دمشقية.



Authentic architecture.

معمار أصيل.