

Lebanon:

A holiday for the Family and a Place to Enjoy Nature

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Some people might ask: Why do tourists select Lebanon as a destination for their holiday? It is not a difficult question to answer. Tens of thousands of families prefer Lebanon as their summer resort rather than other Mediterranean resorts and thousands of them have holiday homes in Lebanon, many of whom are expatriates dispersed around the globe. What is the secret of this attraction? What are the apparent and the hidden factors that made Lebanon an ideal destination for families? We will try to give a simple answer.

First: The climate: Lebanon enjoys the best climate in the world during summer time. Despite the heat and humidity by the seaside, the visitor can swim, practice any sea sport without being subjected to sunburn. All what he has to do, is to drive off to the mountains to experience a change of weather, within a matter of a quarter of an hour of leaving the beach. There he does not need air-conditioning.

Second: Nature: Lebanon has the beautiful

natural scenery, such as rivers, springs, forests, mountains, valleys, a clear sky for many continuous months, rarely found any where else in the world. With every step the spectacular pallet of colours of the abundant flowers. The leaves of the oak trees move in the gentle wind with its entire rich colour and scent. You find yourself as if you were in front of amazing picture drawn by God and still not spoiled by man.

These two factors of the agreeable climate

and nature, in addition to the genuine warmth of the hospitality, appeal to the tourist. People here are always ready to give any service or help asked by the visitor. They do this cordially and with love.

Hotels and Restaurants

Resting places, such as hotels, coffee shops and restaurants are available every where in Lebanon. The visitor can rent a flat from about \$300 a month. The restaurants ➤

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present all variety of dishes, all at affordable prices. You can enjoy a meal from 10 to 50 dollars.

Transport

Transport is very easy and always available. There are modern motorways in most places. You can also use public transport, such as buses, for only few cents. You can always hire a car, with or without a driver, from about \$20 a day, up to \$80. There is an office for car hirer at Beirut airport, which is open day and night. Wherever you go you find hotels and restaurants with a highly educated staff. These services are widely available through out Lebanon.

Historical Sites

Lebanon contains evidence of the most important civilizations in history. This is a major tourist attraction and why so many people come to Lebanon to see its diverse collection of many civilizations. Cities such as Baalbeck, Bylos, Sidon, Tyre, Tripoli, and twons, such as Beiteldine, Der al-Qammar, Aanjar, are all-full with history and they are rich with traditional. There is a national museum in Beirut, which keeps authentic copies of past civilizations. Other places have local history museums. The variety of historical site makes it difficult to see them all in a short stay say a week, but one could have a better chance with a longer stay with the family. He can also enjoy several important summer art festivals, such as Baalbeck, Beiteddine, Sidon, and Byblos. Most Arab families prefer staying in the mountains, with visits to Beirut during the weekdays for shopping, especially at the most prestigious shops with its well-known international trademarks. You are refunded the VAT at the airport. Shopping is an additional attraction to the holiday, so you can kill more than one bird with one stone, as the proverb says. Families could enrol their children in classes to improve their studies while they are on holiday, and they can visit famous hospitals such as the one run by the American University.

Environmental and natural tourism

For nature and environment lovers, Lebanon is a haven. There are several tourist agencies that specialize in this type of tourism. They have special programmes for nature reserves and natural beauty spots, such as: The Cedar of al-Shuff, which is the largest of the reserves (500 sq. km.), The Cedar forest, Ehden, Sidon, Palm islands in Tripoli, Qadisha Valley and others. You can enjoy in these reserves different activities, such as walking, bird watch and



contemplating the sea. There are camps with river and sea activities for children. Special areas are set for this reason in Ramlah al Bedha in Beirut, Chekka, Betroun, Maameltein, Sidon, Al- Asi river, Jezzine, the Awwali river and other places. All swimming pools and resorts are supplied with equipments necessary for different sports and hobbies, such as skiing and scuba diving.

Spending a day in a nature reserve is an enjoyable experience indeed. You can closely study plants or birds, as well as having a fresh air that is good for your health.

Caves and Lakes

Lebanon has many splendid historical caves with rare beauty, such as: Jeita, Kufrhaim, and Qadisha. It has also beautiful lakes such as, the Qarrun dam, Ammeq, Amioun. Some are therapeutic, such as Ibrahim River, Qadisha, Becharre and others.

Mosques and Churches

Mosques and churches complete the heritage scene of Lebanon. They are available in Sidon, Tripoli, Jebeil (Byblos), Beirut and in the mountainous region. Some were built during the Mamalik (Othman time) and Crusade time, most of which have been renovated. To mention some: The churches of central Beirut, Al-Omary Mosque and Al-Tanukhy. In Sidon: Al-Omary Mosque and The Church of the Mattran. Lebanon has known several civilization from Phoenician, Roman, Greek, Canaanite, Pharaohs, Persian and Othman.

Crafts and other activities

Some towns are famous for their crafts and folklore, such as Jezzine which is famous for

its silver work. Other towns are famous for their pottery, glass and carpets. Many of these towns organize festivals and folklore plays.

Touring and taking a holiday in Lebanon is a joyful experience that you will not appreciate until you have become acquainted with it. After the civil war, tourism activities took precedence. The flux of tourism from Arab and non-Arab visitors is coming back to Lebanon, the land of goodness and beauty and good taste acquired through its past and present history. ■

