

Tartous:

A quiet city on the Mediterranean Sea

> Tartous-Zeina El-Cheikh

Among the famous cities of the Mediterranean basin, is the small city of Tartous on the Syrian Coast, the second port in Syria after Lattakia.



View from Qala'at Yahmour

داخل قلعة بحمور



Museum of Tartous

متحف طرطوس



Hosn Suleiman

حصن سليمان

Tartous is about 258 km from Damascus, and 30 km from the Lebanese border. It was occupied by many civilizations through history, and each one has left its indellible mark on the city which was also known as Antaradus, Antartus and Tortosa.

The first chapel dedicated to the Virgin Mary is said to have been built in the 3rd century. The famous cathedral of Tartous was built by the Crusaders in 1123. It is considered by many as a perfect example of crusader architecture in the 13th century. The Cathedral was used as a mosque during the Muslims' reconquest of the city, and in 1840 a minaret was built in its north-west side. The Cathedral was renovated during the French mandate. During the 50s it was converted into a museum containing antiquities from several archaeological sites in the region. Tartous came under the control of the

Templars. It was recaptured by Saladin in 1188. Then it was rebuilt and remained under Templar control until 1291. Today, this rich history of Tartous can be seen through a lot of inhabited historical buildings (Crusaders and Ottoman) in the

oldest part of the city, known as " the old City of Tartous".

Despite the declination in importance of Tartous during the Ottoman period, it became -in the 20th century- an active port and important touristic site. ■

Where to go? What to visit?

One of the famous Crusaders' citadels, Al-Marqab, is located near Banyas city-which is well-known for is oil refinery- about 38 km to the north of Tartous.

Just about 3 km to the coast of Tartous, is located Syria's only island: Arwad. It has often been mentioned in the past. Arwad is a small island, with many cafés and restaurants and an ancient citadel which was a prison for resistance fighters during the French Mandate. It takes twenty minutes by boat to reach the island.

The archaeological site of Amrit (3rd-4th

centuries B.C.) - with its famous temple and stadium -, is a few minutes by car to the south of Tarous. Other sites include Qala'at Yahmour, Hosn Sulaiman, Qala'at Al-Kahf .

The region of Tartous is also well known for many famous summer resorts such as Mashta El-Helu, Al-Kafroun, and Safita with their charming natural location in the mountains, their hotels and restaurants. Every year during the summer, the "Festival of Tarous City" is held with many activities such as handicrafts and art exhibitions, shopping and cultural events.