

Idleb

Natural Beauty and Rich History

> By Gamal Al-Masri

“Idleb is a piece of heaven and a fruitful forest”. This is how a French traveller described the Syrian province in the north-west of the country, bordered to the north by Turkey, Hama from the south, Aleppo from the east and Latika from the west.



The Grand Mosque in Sarmin

صحن الجامع الكبير في سرمين

Covering an area of about 610,000 hectares with a population of about 1.75 million people, it is an Arab gate to Anatolia and Europe which held important transport links, making it home to the largest civilizations. It echoes the voice of history, with and the remains of civilization. A third of the antiquities of Syria – 650 archaeological sites – are in Idleb, one of the oldest kingdoms in history. The most important archaeological discoveries in the 20th century were the royal library, which included 17,000 mud tablets discovered in 1975. The discoveries included the great Ibla Kingdom with its royal palace, rocky caves and the graves of the royal family, jewellery, weapons, ivory items and other acquisitions. The visitor must travel to the Heart of Luza Church, which is one of the most beautiful churches in the world, dating back to the fifth century AD. Next to it is Pise Church, one of the oldest churches in the east close to a group of forgotten cities. The pyramid-

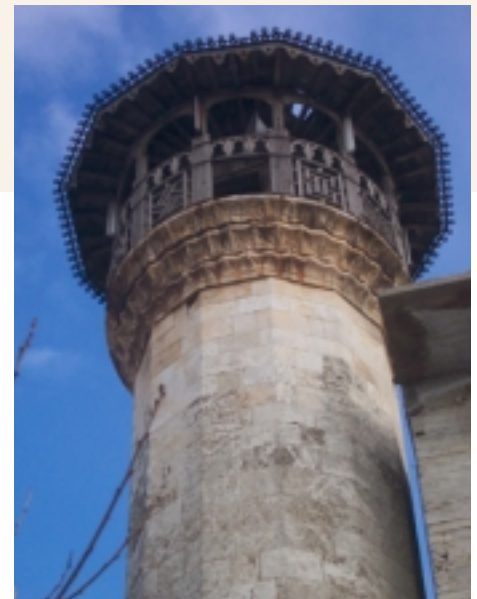
like towers are to be found in Sergela, Elbara and Al-Ma'arah.

Al-Ma'arah contains the tomb of the philosopher and poet Abul Ala Al-Ma'ari, and the tomb of the Caliph Omar bin Abdul Aziz, and his wife, Fatima bint Abdul Malik. There is also Al-Ma'arah Museum, the third largest mosaic museum in the world. The town also has numerous khans, old quarters and a high castle.

God blessed this province with a fertile green land comprising about 80% of the total area. It also has a mild climate and a magical nature, characterized by tranquillity and warmth in the eyes of its people mixed with good feelings and affection.

The tourist facilities are in Arba Mount and Al-Ma'arah, Idleb, Sarakeb and Darkush. The area also has (sulphur) water in Sheikh Isa Spa and facilities in Hama and Salkin.

Idleb is welcoming every visitor with love. Its greenery is a permanent invitation card. ■



The Grand Mosque in Takharim
مأذنة الجامع الكبير في تخاريم



The minaret of the Grand Mosque in Takharim
مدخل جامع كفر تخاريم