

A Honeymoon In Syria



The Fort of Saladin

قلعة صلاح الدين الأيوبي

Damascus - Yasser Al-Ghabra

My wife Suzanne and I decided to spend our honeymoon in Syria, our country. We started to prepare our trip and we chose the towns of Latakiah, Aleppo, Palmyra and Safita. We have no hesitation in suggesting newly weds spend their honeymoon in the country and are eager to share our wonderful experiences with Islamic Tourism.

Ugarit

Our first stopover was on the superb Syrian coast in Latakiah, the pearl of the Mediterranean. This gentle city has played a major role in history, as a commercial and cultural centre. Among its famous sites is Ugarit, the city where the first alphabet, was created. Ugarit was surrounded by an imposing wall and was ingeniously organized. It was crossed by principal and secondary streets, some of which were very narrow and finished in a dead end. The houses were on two levels built on both sides of the streets. The rich and poor had their own districts. Large houses had family tombs in the basements, decorated with carved stones, as well as wells, baths and meticulous water pipelines.

Most of Ugarit's buildings, which testify to the organisational skills of its inhabitants, remain buried under ground. Three palaces have been discovered, including the city's main palace. Its construction dates back to the 13th century B.C. It was one of the most

important palaces of the Middle East, composed of 90 rooms surrounding five courts, with a garden in their centre, and four covered courts.

The walls of this palace remained in good condition up to five meters in height. The staircases show that it had two stories. On the first level were rooms for guests, archives, offices, store rooms, and guards and servants quarters. The second level was reserved for the royal family. In the north-western zone of the garden important ivory articles were discovered including the celebrated ivory head and a round table.

In Latakiah the Hotel Riviera of the Cham chain, which overlooks the Mediterranean beach, is an ideal place for lunch. The Cham chain has delightful hotels in all major cities and towns and we made use of them throughout our journey.

Aleppo

Our next stop was Aleppo, a city famous for its history, museum, fortress, baths and covered souks, considered the most beautiful in the Middle-East. It is a history museum and a history park. It is also a city full of vitality. Each civilization seems to have left its trace: an eternal church, a unique mosque with its architecture and decoration, a school, a hospital, a bath etc. The old covered souk has a network which connects the whole city.



Bal Temple

معبد بعل



A door inside the Fort of Aleppo

باب مزخرف داخل قلعة حلب



The principal boulevard where caravans and merchants were received

مدخل الشارع الرئيسي الذي استخدم لاستقبال القوافل في تدمر



A wall in Bal Temple which rises to 18m

جدار لمعبد بعل يصل ارتفاعه إلى حوالي ١٨م



Aleppo was always inhabited and prosperous since the middle of the 3rd century BC. It is the only city in the world to gather all the historical schools of architecture.

Palmyra

Palmyra, in the middle of the Syrian desert is a jewel in the crown of Syrian tourism. Its central geographical position enabled it to be the centre of exchanges between Mesopotamia and the Mediterranean. Archaeological excavations revealed that it is one of the world's oldest cities. The Moslems conquered it in 636 A.D. under the

leadership of Khalid Ibn el-Walid. Its splendid monuments inform us about its glorious history under the reign of Queen Zennobia.

Palmyra is characterized by the kindness and generosity of its people. It includes astonishing old monuments, such as the Large Fortress (fortress of Fakhreddine Al-Maani II) located on the highest mountain in Palmyra; buildings with high columns, including one large theatre, and the principal boulevard where caravans and merchants were received. Another attraction is the tombs known as "Madafine:" some are located very deep under ground, some are

close to surface and some tombs take the form of towers.

There is also the temple of the god "Bal", founded in the first century A.D. It is 250 m in length and 210 m wide. In the centre is an altar with Byzantine decorations.

Safita

Our fourth stopover was Safita, a village which was once called the "white Tower" or the "White Palace", because of the white stones with which it was built. Safita is an Aramaic term meaning "fresh air".

It is built on a mountain with a soft landscape some 35 km to the east of Tartous. This city is famous for its Crusader fortress called "the Tower". It overlooks most of the surrounding villages and mountains. The tower was a means of communication between Al-Markab fortress on the coast and Al-Hosn fortress in the south-west.

The Crusaders transmitted their message through smoke during the day and by fire at night. The inhabitants of Safita are proud of this tower and consider it, together with the church of Saint Michael, as the symbol of their city.

Safita has a beautiful landscape and is surrounded by olive groves. Today Syria is a country of tolerance, peace and old civilizations. Tourists do not have to worry about security. Enjoy thousands of historic sites and the bewitching environment of sea, hills, plains, valleys and desert. In Syria, you will find the beautiful colours of nature and you will spend your time among charming people. Syria is a wonderful place for a honeymoon and a holiday. ■