

Lebanon and Syria – Antiquities of the Levant

Tour Code LS

Departing 1 November 2010

A wonderfully detailed and varied journey through the old Levant, an area with a wealth of history of power and control that has left a cultural legacy as well as an unrivalled concentration of archaeological remains. The fabulous classical ruins of Palmyra and Baalbek give testament to the rise of the great civilisations of antiquity. Damascus and Aleppo are fine examples of the great architectural wonders of the Islamic period whilst Crac des Chevaliers is arguably the finest castle in the medieval world. Also scenically beautiful with a range of mountains, deep fertile valleys, serene desert and Mediterranean coast mixed with the region's friendly peoples, fine cuisine and local wines, the countries have much to offer!



Temple of Jupiter, Baalbek
© www.syderimages.com

ITINERARY

Day 1 Fly to Beirut – Tuesday 1 November

Afternoon departure from London Heathrow with BMI direct to Beirut. Evening arrival and transfer to the Plaza hotel

Day 2 In Beirut – Wednesday 2 November

We have a morning city tour including the excellent National Museum with its unrivalled collection of the region's artefacts, and the city's reconstructed Downtown area. Later we drive into the Chouf Mountains to visit the beautiful 19th century palace at Beit Eddine returning to Beirut in the evening. Dinner at a fine Lebanese restaurant (B,D)

Day 3 Visit Tyre and Sidon – Thursday 3 November

Today we venture south to the old Phoenician ports of Sidon and Tyre. At Tyre, its extensive Roman ruins include the largest hippodrome in the Middle East and a well preserved bath complex overlooking the Mediterranean. In Sidon we visit the Crusader castle of the sea and wander through the towns' beautifully restored labyrinthine souq. Dinner at a local restaurant (B,D)

Day 4 Drive to Bekaa Valley. Visit Aanjar and Baalbek – Friday 4 November

We depart Beirut this morning heading into the Bekaa Valley stopping at the Ksara winery to sample some of Lebanon's finest wines. We continue to the tranquil Ummayyad remains at Aanjar before arriving at Baalbek to visit the most famous of Lebanon's ancient sites with its glorious temples of Jupiter and Bacchus. We spend the afternoon exploring this amazing complex with an overnight stay at the 19th century built Palmyra hotel, close to the site and that oozes a wonderful sense of charm and faded grandeur. Dinner in the hotel. (B,D)

Day 5 Via the Cedars of Lebanon to Byblos – Saturday 5 November

Reluctantly leaving Baalbek behind we drive across the Lebanese Mountains and drive via Bcharre to view the remaining Cedars of Lebanon. Some are reputed to be 3000 years old. Bcharre, the centre of the Maronite church, is dramatically located and offers a tranquil break for lunch before we descend once again to the coast and drive to the ancient city of Byblos. We have a two-night stay at the Ahiaram hotel situated close to the old harbour area of the city (B,D)

Day 6 In Byblos – Sunday 6 November

We spend the morning exploring the ancient ruins of old Byblos said to be the oldest continuously inhabited town in the world. We can then enjoy a wonderful fish lunch at a famous restaurant overlooking the harbour and spend the afternoon in the delightful old town area at leisure, to explore its gentle paced souk and relax with a stroll around its pleasant harbour (B,L)

Patrick Syder Travel

Day 7 Visit Tripoli. Cross into Syria. Visit to Crac Des Chevaliers – Monday 7 November

We drive up the coast to pause at Tripoli Castle before continuing to the border and crossing into Syria. A short drive brings us to the magnificent Crac Des Chevaliers, the best preserved of all Crusader castles. After a break for lunch we spend the afternoon exploring this fabulous complex before continuing to Hama for an overnight stop at the Orient hotel with dinner (B,D)

Day 8 Visit Hama, Apamea and St Simeon Monastery – Tuesday 8 November

We visit Hama this morning, situated on the banks of Orontes to view the ancient Roman waterwheels (Norias). Continuing to Apamea we walk the kilometre long colonnaded street with its fluted columns and fabulous views across the fertile plains. After lunch we drive to see the Monastery of St. Simeon, superbly located with breathtaking views that stretch to Turkey. We continue to Aleppo for two nights in the centrally located Ramses hotel. Dinner in a local restaurant (B,D)

Day 9 In Aleppo – Wednesday 9 November

We have a full day to discover historic Aleppo. We visit the vast Citadel that dominates the city, the Great Mosque and neighbouring madressah and the fabulous authentic covered bazaar. Dinner at a local restaurant to enjoy typical Aleppo dishes (B,D)

Day 10 Visit Rasafa and Qasr Al Heir. Drive to Palmyra – Thursday 10 November

We journey east this morning into the Syrian desert to Rasafa. Built of gypsum, this once vast trading city is now an eerie half-buried ruin. We also pause at the startling Umayyad Place of Qasr Al Heir before continuing to the ancient oasis city of Palmyra; Syria's archaeological highlight. Two nights at the Villa Palmyra hotel located in town and close to the ruins of the Roman city. Dinner in the hotel (B,D)

Day 11 In Palmyra – Friday 11 November

We have a full day to marvel at the sun-baked temples and triumphal arches that make up this stunning site. We also include a visit to the intriguing Tomb complex and site museum with its unrivalled collection of Palmyrene artefacts. After a break for lunch we continue our visit with Bel Temple before ascending to the Arab castle to witness the sunset over the ruins, the climax of a splendid day. (B,D)

Day 12 Drive to Damascus. City Tour – Saturday 12 November

An early departure to Damascus this morning allows us sufficient time in the capital for a walking tour of the old city in the afternoon to see the famous Omayyad Mosque and Azem Palace. Two nights at the City hotel. Dinner at a traditional restaurant in the old city (B,D)

Day 13 In Damascus – Sunday 13 November

A visit to the National Museum this morning reveals an excellent collection of treasures from sites across the country, many of which we have visited during our tour. The afternoon is left free for further exploration of this historic city at one's own pace and to soak up its atmosphere and charm. Our farewell dinner tonight is at one of the city's top restaurants (B,D)

Day 14 Fly London – Monday 14 November

An early transfer to the airport for the return flight to London Heathrow with BMI arriving in the early afternoon (B)

Cost £1795.00 per person in a twin room (excludes international flight) Single supplement charge £300.00



St Simeons Monastery, Syria
© www.syderimages.com

Price includes –

- ▶ Tour accompanied by Patrick Syder from London
- ▶ Specialist guides throughout the tour
- ▶ All transportation - private a/c minibus
- ▶ Full sightseeing programme including entrance fees
- ▶ Quality local four star hotels on a half board basis
- ▶ Dinners at traditional restaurants as indicated
- ▶ Syrian and Lebanon visa fees
- ▶ All government and departure taxes
- ▶ All airport transfers
- ▶ Porter, hotel and restaurant staff gratuities

Not included – travel insurance, drinks, some meals, guide and driver gratuities, BMI international flight (cost from £400.00 with Polani Travel or direct from the airline)

[Click here for booking form](#)