LEBANON & JORDAN: Insight into the Levant

ITINERARY | NOVEMBER 8-19, 2020

Delve into the critical issues facing Jordan, Lebanon, and their neighbors while exploring the unique beauty, stunning antiquities, and varied cultures of the region.

NOVEMBER 8: DEPART
• Depart the U.S. on independent flights to Beirut.

NOVEMBER 9: BEIRUT D
• Upon arrival in Beirut, transfer to Sofitel Beirut Le Gabriel.
• Join your fellow travelers for a welcome dinner at Abd El Wahab.

NOVEMBER 10: BEIRUT B, L, D
• This morning we have asked Ali Shehab, a journalist based in Lebanon, to meet the group. His articles have appeared on international and Pan Arab newspapers and websites including CNN in Arabic, Huffington Post Arabic, SaSa Post, and Assafir.
• Later, explore Beirut on a walking tour. Discover the stories behind several of the city’s impressive treasures and learn about the struggles of rebuilding post-war during a meeting with a construction company with an ambitious plan to help the city regain its place as the business capital of the Middle East.
• As excavation and construction work continues, Beirut is discovering and restoring a number of long-buried vestiges of the past. Included in our downtown tour will be a stop at St. George’s Greek Orthodox Cathedral, which offers a perfect example to discover the many layers of history that exist under the city. Built in 1767, it is one of the oldest buildings in the city. In 1975, during the civil war, a bomb fell here and unearthed the ruins of a Byzantine church that has since been turned into a museum.
• Meeting us at the cathedral will be archaeologist, Leila Badre, who is largely responsible for the excavation work. In 1979 Ms. Badre founded the Society of the Friends of the Museum, an organization that has promoted archaeological activities and organizes lectures and exhibitions. She is currently the director of the Archaeological Museum of the American University of Beirut.

• Enjoy lunch at a local restaurant

• After lunch visit the National Museum of Beirut, whose collection covers the whole of antiquity and is considered one of the richest museums in the Middle East. Among its many treasures highlighting the key role Lebanon played in ancient civilization is the 13th century B.C. tomb of King Ahiram, discovered in Byblos.

• End the day meeting with Justice Without Frontiers is a nonprofit juristic civil organization headquartered in Beirut. Its role is to develop and promote democratic reform and rule of law, and undertake legal and social projects that support human rights.

• Meet in the hotel lobby to walk to the Liza restaurant.

NOVEMBER II: BEIRUT B, L, D

• This morning drive one hour south to Beiteddine.

• Beiteddine continues to preserve something of the glamour that surrounded the court of Lebanon’s last ruling prince, Bechir II. This citadel was built on the scale of the grandest European royal palaces and incorporated the most graceful features of Arabic architecture, with tier upon tier of arcades and courtyards, marble mosaic decorations, and ornate coffered ceilings.

• Walk through the impressive anthropological collection of Beiteddine and see the incredible Byzantine mosaics that are exhibited in the stables of the palaces below the royal quarters.

• Enjoy lunch in the nearby town of Deir El Qamar at a local restaurant.

• Return to Beirut mid-afternoon.

• Before dinner meet with staff from Act for Human Rights (ALEF). ALEF is a Lebanese human rights watchdog organization that works on documenting, and promoting human rights violations and values in Lebanon.

• Dinner tonight is at Le Petit Gris.

NOVEMBER II: BEIRUT B, L, D

• This morning enjoy a private tour of the Nicolas Sursock Museum. Located in a 100-year-old private villa, the museum is dedicated to works of contemporary Lebanese artists and features a permanent collection of Islamic art.

• Continue on to the Aishti Foundation where, pending availability, we will meet with Tony Salame, the foundation’s founder. The foundation works hard to bring together contemporary exchanges between East local and West through art.

• After lunch in the foundation’s restaurant, Art People, drive 45 minutes north to Byblos, which is claimed to have been inhabited longer than any other town on earth. Upon arrival begin exploring the city where seven different civilizations have raised their buildings, accumulated their wealth, and buried their dead.
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- Byblos’ history began over seven thousand years ago. Your route begins in reverse chronological order at the Crusader Castle. The Crusaders were the last of the great builders in Byblos, and their castle, still impressively intact, forms the entranceway to the rest of the ruins. The view from the roof of the castle is superb a sweeping panorama of 7,000 years of history, sandwiched between the sea and the mountains.

- Continue on through the remains of the densely packed streets and houses of the Phoenician town where, from about 4,000 BC, the Phoenicians lived, worked, and traded.

- Enjoy dinner at Byblos before returning to Beirut.

**NOVEMBER 13: BEIRUT**

- Depart early and spend the day exploring the beautiful interior of Lebanon.

- Stop first in Baalbek, a drive of almost two hours, where the mountainous backdrop is all that can dwarf the size of this impressive archaeological site. The Phoenicians were the first to build temples at Baalbek, which was on their caravan route from Tyre to Damascus and Palmyra.

- From here drive to the well-preserved UNESCO World Heritage Site of Anjar. Unlike any other historical site in Lebanon, Anjar is unique because the remains were only built during one period in the past, the Umayyad period. Dating to the 8th century the site is newer than others in the country and only thrived for a few decades.

- Enjoy lunch in the Beqaa Valley at Chateau Ksara, Lebanon’s oldest winery.

- After lunch return to Beirut stopping at the town of Mtein, a traditional mountain village where one can admire traditional Lebanese architecture from the 17th to the 19th century. It is one of the oldest villages in the country and features an exquisite central square.

- Dinner tonight is at leisure.

**NOVEMBER 14: AMMAN**

- Depart for the airport and your flight to Amman.

- Upon arrival, enjoy a walking tour of old Amman. Our city orientation tour begins at the Citadel. The main focus of the citadel is provided by the 8th century Umayyad Palace. Inside the citadel is the small Jordan Archaeological Museum, which offers the complete history of Amman’s region. Admire the Roman Temple of Hercules that stands in front of the museum and was built during the reign of Marcus Aurelius (161-180 AD).

- Enjoy lunch at the American Center for Oriental Research. After learn more about this organization committed to the preservation of sites that are of particular significance to Jordan’s rich and varied cultural heritage.

- Transfer to the InterContinental Amman for check-in.

- Enjoy dinner this evening at the Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature at the Wild Jordan Center.
**NOVEMBER 15: AMMAN**

- This morning meet with senior staff members from the US Embassy to learn about relations between the US and Jordan. Staff will also provide unique insights on politics in the Middle East and Jordan’s strategic location bordering Israel, Syria, Iraq and Saudi Arabia.

- Stop at the offices of Asma Khader, a prominent Palestinian Jordanian lawyer and human rights activist. Her national appointments include Minister of Culture (2003-2005); Minister of State and the official spokesperson for the Jordanian Government (2013); Member of the Jordanian Senate (2013); Secretary General of the Jordanian National Commission for women (2007-2014); and Commissioner at the Independent Election Commission (2014-2016). She will address human rights issues including the rights of Palestinian refugees.

- Drive 45 minutes to Jerash. Upon arrival enjoy a locally prepared lunch.

- Explore the site of Jerash. The city came to prominence during the Hellenistic period and in Roman times it was a prosperous city of the Decapolis. Excavations have revealed two theaters, an unusual oval-shaped forum, temples, churches, a market place, and baths. A sense of grace and proportion make this site a pleasure to explore.

- Return to Amman and enjoy dinner at leisure.

**NOVEMBER 16: PETRA**

- Meet with Sa’eda Kilani, founder of the House of Ethics, and a journalist and author of several books including How to Become a Minister in Jordan. This book, which is based on an analysis of ministers CVs reveals that a quarter of the 301 ministers in 2016 were appointed to ministries that do not match their qualifications and educational background.

- From the meeting depart for Petra stopping first at Mt. Nebo, where Moses is said to be buried. On a clear day it is possible to see the Dead Sea and the spires of the churches in Jerusalem. Although little remains of the buildings that housed them, there are a number of spectacular mosaics.

- Continue on to Madaba and enjoy lunch at a local restaurant run by a cooperative of women who use local ingredients to produce wonderful Jordanian cuisine.

- After lunch visit the Madaba Archaeological Park and view the famous 6th-century map of Palestine, which is in the form of a mosaic. Although the map is now far from complete, many features can still be made out including the Nile River, the Dead Sea, and the map of Jerusalem showing the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

- Continue three hours to Petra and check-in at the Movenpick Petra. Dinner is at the hotel this evening.

**NOVEMBER 17: PETRA**

- Depart the hotel early for Petra. It is hard to put into words the beauty and appeal of this site. It is certainly the most spectacular archaeological site of the Middle East and was once the capital of the Nabateans, nomadic Arabs who dominated the Transjordan area in pre-Roman times.

- Spend the morning exploring the ruins including the Amphitheater, the Royal Tombs, and the Temple of the Winged Lions.
• Enjoy lunch at the Basin Restaurant on the site of Petra.

• After lunch meet with Bedouin Mofleh Bdoul, for a discussion of the role of the Bedouin in Petra. Members of the Bdoul Bedouin tribe are Petra’s traditional guardians. It was Bdoul tribesmen who guided explorer Johann Burckhardt into the ruins in 1812, leading to the Nabataean city’s discovery to the outside world. They have lived in Petra for the past few hundred years until the site’s newly acquired UNESCO World Heritage status spurred the Jordanian government into removing them from their cave-homes amid the ruins to a nearby hilltop village.

• For those who would like, continue on to hike up to the Deir Plateau (800 steps one way) where there are wonderful views. Please note this option includes 800 steps one-way or the High Place (550 feet) above the Basin. For anyone who does not wish to climb, enjoy time at leisure.

• Later this afternoon visit the newly opened Petra Museum.

• Enjoy dinner tonight at Petra Kitchen where we will work alongside local chefs to prepare traditional dishes using fresh ingredients. By sharing recipes and flavors we will learn more about Jordanian history and culture.

NOVEMBER 18: DEAD SEA

• Rise very early this morning to drive just over 90 minutes south to Wadi Rum where huge pillars of sandstone rock rise abruptly and majestically from the sandy desert floor, their cliffs, sheer in places or else twisted and weathered into outlandish shapes, towering to heights of over 1,500 meters. Although on the surface Wadi Rum may appear inhospitable and barren, the desert here is a complex eco-system rich in life. Enjoy a one-hour jeep ride into this magnificent landscape made famous by the setting of David Lean’s epic film Lawrence of Arabia.

• Afterwards, head towards the Dead Sea stopping for lunch en route.

• Arrive at the Dead Sea Marriott Resort & Spa, located on the banks of the Dead Sea. The rooms here are set amidst gardens dotted with lagoons and waterfalls.

• After checking in there will be time to experience the Dead Sea.

• Enjoy a farewell dinner this evening at the hotel.

NOVEMBER 19: DEPART

• This morning, transfer to the airport to catch your independent flights home.
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**PRICING**

Price based on double occupancy: $7,550
Single supplement: $1,670
Airfare: Beirut to Amman $220

**INCLUDED**

- All accommodations based on double occupancy in hotels as listed
- Airport transfer for those arriving and departing on designated group tour dates
- Meals as listed with bottled water. Wine at welcome and farewell dinners
- Bottled water on the bus
- Sightseeing, excursions and entrances as listed
- Transportation in a deluxe motor-coach with air-conditioning
- Services of an English-speaking local guide in each country and a tour manager who will travel with the group throughout the program.
- Basic gratuities to staff
- “Whisper” devices that allow for ease of hearing guides at sites

**NOT INCLUDED**

- International airfare to Beirut returning from Amman
- Passport and visa fees
- Transfers for those not arriving or departing on the designated group tour dates
- Travel Insurance
- Excess luggage charges
- Items of a purely personal nature
- Any items not listed

Scheduled events and their timing are subject to change

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