

SYRIA, LEBANON & JORDAN: GROUP TRAVEL PROGRAMS

BIBLICAL JOURNEYS THROUGH LEBANON, SYRIA AND JORDAN

14 nights: Arrive Beirut, Lebanon, 3 nights; drive to Bcharre, 2 nights; drive to Damascus, 2 nights; drive to Aleppo, 2 nights; fly to Amman, 2 nights; drive via Dead Sea sites to Petra, 2 nights; drive to Amman, 1 night; depart Amman.

Day 1, Sunday: Arrive Beirut

Arrive Beirut international airport. Transfer to Le Meridien Commodore/Hazmah Rotana hotel.

Day 2, Monday: Beirut

Take a tour to explore Beirut city; the destroyed town center is charming, and once again active. Visit the Roman baths with remnants of brick vaults and columns, and the trendy central district, which has been beautifully restored. Also visit Martyr's Square, St. John's Church built by Crusaders in the 12th century, and the historic Greek Orthodox and Greek Catholic churches opposite the Parliament. Afternoon, visit the national museum, now fully restored, with antiquities and treasures from all over Lebanon, dating from prehistoric times through the Ottoman period.

B

Day 3, Tuesday: Beirut

Take a full day trip to Sidon and Tyre. First, drive to Cana where Jesus performed His first miracle of turning water into wine. See the site of an early church cave and stone figures to commemorate this event. Drive to Tyre, a historian and archaeologist's delight. Here, visit sites of Roman columns and ruins, baths, Al Baas archway and Roman cemetery, and hippodrome – the largest in the world! Lunch at Tyre. Drive to Sidon. Visit the crusader's castle, old city, souqs, soap museum and caravan sarai. Return to Beirut.

B, L

Day 4, Wednesday: Beirut - Bcharre

This morning, drive north to Byblos, stopping en route at Junieh to see the Church of St. Paul with its gold dome, and Our Lady of Lebanon, Harissa, statue and chapel, situated on a hill overlooking the Mediterranean. Continue to Byblos, said to date back 7000 years! Visit the Byblos castle and museum, Roman columns, temple, and amphitheater. Also visit the 12th century Cathedral of St. John built by the Crusaders. Lunch at Byblos. Continue to Bcharre via Chekka. The drive to Bcharre takes you through mountain landscapes in north Lebanon. Along the way you'll see spectacular views of peaks and gorges as well as olive groves, vineyards, valleys and mountain peaks. Stay at Chebat hotel in Bcharre.

B, L

Day 5, Thursday: Bcharre

Today, we'll explore Bcharre, Kadisha Valley and the Cedars of Lebanon. Maronite Christians settled here many years ago, still visible by some dozen monasteries and numerous roadside shrines. Bcharre has three main churches. The largest is the Saba Church, built like a small cathedral on the edge of the gorge. We'll also visit the Virgin Mary Church. Then, visit a museum and monastery dedicated to poet, artist and philosopher, Khalil Gibran. The museum houses many of his paintings, drawings and personal items.

The Kadisha Valley is one of the more important early Christian monastic settlements in the world, its monasteries positioned dramatically in a rugged landscape. Visit Kadisha grotto, a

cavern with natural formations, rock-cut churches and monasteries. An exhilarating drive to The Cedars of Lebanon takes you through the last remaining cedar forests, often mentioned in the Bible for its wood. Well watered are the trees of the Lord, the cedars of Lebanon, which he planted.

B

Day 6, Friday: Bcharre - Damascus, Syria

Drive to Tripoli through hills and valleys of north Lebanon for a brief stopover to visit the citadel, Crusader castle of Saint-Gilles, and ruin church of Saint John of the Pilgrims Mount near the citadel. Then drive south along the coast to Beirut. Lunch at Beirut. Drive to Damascus, completing immigration documentation at the Beirut-Damascus border. Continue to Damascus. Stay at Cham Palace hotel, a luxury hotel with excellent rooms and restaurants, very centrally located. Take the rest of the day at leisure.

B, L, D

Day 7, Saturday: Damascus

Morning, visit the National Museum of Syria to see a fine collection of Roman and Greek sculptures, archeological artifacts, a fragment of the oldest known alphabet in the world, and an 1800 year-old synagogue transported from Dura Europos on the Euphrates River. Also visit a craft market to view a colorful display of boxes, jewelry, oriental carpets, and more. Afternoon, see a section of the original Roman fortress wall, and visit a souq - a bustling covered bazaar that fills the senses with colors and life. Then, walk through Straight Street (the same street that St. Paul once took!), the Christian quarter with its charming alleyways and handicraft shops, to St. Annanias Chapel, where Paul received his eyesight. Also visit the Chapel of St. Paul, built at the place where Paul was lowered in a basket to escape Roman soldiers.

B, D

Day 8, Sunday: Damascus-Aleppo

Depart Damascus in an air conditioned coach, heading north, visiting en route the towns of Seydnaya and Mallula with its picturesque views and Christian heritage. Drive on to Crac de Chevaliers, where we will enjoy our lunch at a restaurant with a view of the castle. Then, visit the magnificent medieval castle of Crac de Chevaliers, built by the Crusaders in the 12th century. Continue to Aleppo. Visit Christian dead city at Serjilla en route, with remains of a Byzantine settlement, including houses, a church, baths, tombs and sarcophagi. At Aleppo, stay at Chahba Cham Palace Aleppo, a 5 star luxury hotel with excellent facilities, and very central.

B, L, D

Day 9, Monday: Aleppo

This morning, visit the citadel, an impregnable fortress, standing high above the city on a hill, above layers of civilization dating as far back as the Hittites. Explore the largest souq in the world, with 8 miles of covered lanes filled with colorful shops and wares. Then, walk through the Christian quarter, and visit a small but well laid out National Museum. In the afternoon, drive to the outskirts of the city to visit the fascinating Church of St. Simeon perched on a hill with pines, and 6th C Byzantine church at Mushabak.

B, D

Day 10, Tuesday: Aleppo - Amman, Jordan

Take a morning flight to Amman, RJ 3501, 7:30-9:05 AM. Stay at Amman Cham Palace hotel. Visit sites of ancient Amman. At the Citadel, towering over the city, visit the Temple of Hercules, Umayyad Palace and a Byzantine church. Also visit the Jordan Archeological Museum, with pre-historic antiquities and an exhibit of the Dead Sea scrolls. Afternoon, visit a Roman theater, carved into a hill, and the interesting Jordan Folklore Museum. Finally, explore the souks, with free time to see an array of handicrafts.

B

Day 11, Wednesday: Amman

Today, we'll visit Biblical sites north and west of Amman. Drive north to visit sites at Jerash and Ajloun in the hills of Gilead. Jerash is one of the best preserved Decapolis cities of the Roman Empire. Explore the oval plaza, colonnaded streets, hippodrome, Hadrian's Arch, baths, churches and a cathedral. At Ajloun, explore a majestic 12th century Crusaders' castle overlooking the Jordan Valley. Nearby, at Anjara, it is believed that Jesus, his disciples, and Mary passed through the town and rested here in a cave, which is now commemorated as a church to Our Lady of the Mountain. Drive south to Salt to visit the tomb/shrine of Job. Lunch en route. Continuing south, we pass an area where the tombs of Jethro and some sons of Jacob are laid. We see Elijah's Hill, where he ascended to heaven, and visit Bethany beyond the Jordan, where Mary and Martha lived. This is also where John baptized Jesus. Return to Amman.

B, L**Day 12, Thursday: Amman - Dead Sea - Petra**

Depart Amman, heading south on King's Highway. En route, visit Madaba, the city of mosaics; and Mount Nebo, to see a memorial church dedicated to Moses, which overlooks the Dead Sea valley and Jerusalem. Lunch at a restaurant on the Dead Sea. Continue south, passing the site of Sodom and Gomorrah near Bab adh Dhra, to Safi to see Lot's cave and monastery. Arrive Petra evening, and stay at Movenpick Petra hotel, renowned for its intricate Arabesque interior design and collection of antiques and artwork.

B, L**Day 13, Friday: Petra**

Today, we explore Petra, a legacy of the Nabataeans that once dominated trade routes of ancient Arabia, set in a spectacular desert gorge. This is also the area where Moses struck water. A walk through a narrow chasm between soaring cliffs brings you to a dramatic view of the Treasury. Move on through funerary halls, temples, arched gateways, haunting rock drawings, a street of facades, theater, royal tombs, and a colonnaded street that leads to the main temple and a museum. Also see Aaron's tomb. Finally, a climb brings you to an impressive monastery.

B, L**Day 14, Saturday: Petra - Amman**

We drive north on King's Highway through the land of Edom and Moab to Karak, where we visit a Crusader's castle and tomb/shrine of Noah. We then get onto the Desert Highway to get to Amman. Stay at Amman Cham Palace hotel. The evening is at leisure for independent activities.

B, L**Day 15, Sunday: Depart Amman**

Morning, at leisure. Transfer to international airport for flight back home.

B
