

LEBANON

THE LAND OF BEAUTY AND HISTORY

September 26 - October 09, 2024

Led by Dr. Micki Pistorius of Ancient Origins

Thursday, September 26
Arrive in Beirut (Lebanon)



Upon arrival in Beirut, meet and transfer to *Rotana Arjaan Hotel* or similar for check-in, dinner & overnight. (D)

Friday, September 27
Beirut



After breakfast, head to visit the **Beirut National Museum** and then head to **Downtown Beirut**, which includes contemporary high-rises, as well as, Parisian-style buildings constructed in the old tradition with beautiful wrought iron work, where the new blends well with the old. Visit the ruins of the **Roman Baths** near the

Grand Serail, the Parliament building, **martyrs' square**. In the evening, return to the *Hotel* for dinner and overnight. (B,L,D)



Saturday, September 28

Beirut



After breakfast, continue visiting Beirut and explore the **Phoenician ruins of Beirut**. Head to visit the **American University of Beirut (AUB)** and visit AUB's museum. Founded in 1868, it is the third oldest museum in the Near East, after Cairo and Constantinople. It is a regional Museum with collections from 7 countries (Lebanon, Syria, Cyprus, Egypt, Palestine, Iraq, and Iran). The Museum was renovated in 1999 and reopened to the public in 2006. After the visit walk through **Al Hamara street** and have lunch in one of the local restaurants. Return to *the Hotel* for dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**



Sunday, September 29

Beirut - Sidon



After breakfast on our way by bus to **Sidon**, we visit the **Eshmun temple** outside Sidon, an ancient place of worship dedicated to Eshmun, the Phoenician god of healing. In Sidon we visit the most **interesting old Soap Museum**. The Museum building is an old soap factory built in the 17th century, although containing parts thought to date back to the 13th century. A historical section of the museum introduces artifacts which were found during onsite excavations and which include remains of clay pipe heads dating from the 17th to 19th century as well as pottery fragments. **The Khan Sacy Museum** has undergone a series of modifications but in its heart, it hides a much older story. This Khan is located within the Old City walls. It dates to the Crusader period and then to the Mamluks. It is composed of rooms of a majestic height with three water wells, three hammams and an oven." We spend leisure time in **the old city** and souks of Sidon then transfer to the *AL Kala' Hotel* or similar for check-in, dinner and overnight **(B,L,D)**

Monday, September 30

Sidon - Tyre



After breakfast, continue exploring Sidon, located on the Mediterranean coast of Lebanon, this ancient Canaanite and Phoenician city has been the seat of great religious, political, and commercial value. It is said to have been inhabited since 4000 B.C. In the years before Christianity, Sidon had many conquerors: Assyrians, Babylonians, Egyptians, Persians, Greeks, and finally Romans. Herod the Great, Jesus and Paul the Apostle have left their footprints in Sidon. In AD 1228, the Crusaders built Sidon's Sea Castle as a fortress on a small island connected to the mainland by a narrow 80m long roadway. The island was formerly the site of a temple to **Melqart**, the Phoenician version of Heracles.

Also visit the archaeological sites next to the castle: the **Sandikli site**, and College site, with indications of early Bronze Age habitation. Archaeologists have also come to the conclusion that this site might be the remains of the pleasure gardens or Paradesos of the Persians during the era of **Artaxerxes III Ochus** and Tennes of Sidon. The famous Alexander Sarcophagus was discovered at the necropolis of Sidon. Then visit **St. Louis fort** was built in 1254 by French crusaders on the site of an earlier Fatimid fortress and was altered a number of times until the 17th century. It is called St Louis after the French King Louis Capet who occupied it during the crusades. The site now occupied by the Castle of St. Louis is said to have been the acropolis of the ancient city. Some remains of this acropolis still exist, including a theater. The citadel was probably completely demolished and then rebuilt by the Arabs. We also visit the remains of the Fatimid Mosque featuring a water basin and circuits for ablutions – next to the crusader castle. Drive to **Tyre**, and upon arrival, transfer to *Asamina Boutique Hotel* or similar for check-in, dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Tuesday, October 01

Tyre (Beaufort)



After breakfast, we visit **Beaufort** or Belfort Castle, known locally as **Qal'at al- Shaqif Arnun**, a Crusader fortress. There was a fortification on the site before it was captured by **Fulk**, King of Jerusalem, in 1139 and construction of the Crusader castle probably began soon after. Saladin captured Beaufort in 1190, but 60 years later Crusaders re-took it. In 1268 Sultan Baibars finally captured the castle for the Islamic forces.

In the afternoon, head to visit the **Al-Bass Tyre necropolis**, a UNESCO World Heritage Site situated next to the el-Buss refugee camp. The necropolis, constituting the principal entrance of the town in ancient times, is to be found on either side of a wide Roman and Byzantine Avenue dominated by a triumphal arch of the second century. Then visit the **Al Mina** Archaeological site, dating from the third millennium BC, these atmospheric ruins cover a large area leading down to an ancient, submerged harbour. Highlights include a street paved with geometrical Roman and Byzantine mosaics, on each side of which are rows of large columns. A five-minute walk north of the main Al Mina site brings us to the ruins of a 12th-century Crusader cathedral, along with a network of Roman and Byzantine roads. The city of Tyre was particularly known for the production of a rare and extraordinarily expensive sort of purple dye, produced from the Murex shellfish, known as Tyrian purple. This colour was, in many cultures of ancient times, reserved for the use of royalty, or at least nobility. In the late afternoon, enjoy the sites of an Old Town walkabout of Tyre. Return to the *Hotel* for dinner & overnight. **(B,L,D)**



Wednesday, October 02

Tyre - Zahle



Tebnin Castle was built by Hugh of Fauquembergues, prince of Galilee, in 1106 AD to assist in capturing Tyre. After Hugh's death, the surroundings of Tibnin were

raided by 'Izz al-Mulk, who killed the populace and made off with booty. Tebnin was made an independent seignury, given to Humphrey I before 1109. After Humphrey I of Toron, the castle and lordship of Toron successively passed to his descendants Humphrey II and Humphrey IV.

The **Scandelion** Castle was built by the Crusaders in Lebanon in 1116, during the reign of Baldwin I of Jerusalem, other sources indicate that they took the city of Iskandarouna, or Scandelion, in 1124. It became a strategic high ground, used to defend Tyre. In the late afternoon, drive to **Zahle'** and upon arrival transfer to *AL Kadri Hotel* or similar for check-in, dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Note: All sites mentioned above require a special permission to visit. if permission is not granted, we will be visiting the following sites: Deir Al qamar, Beit Al Deen- and Anjar.



Thursday, October 03

Zahle' (Baalbek)



After breakfast, drive to **Baalbek** and spend the whole morning visiting the archaeological site of Baalbek, also known as Heliopolis, meaning Sun City during Roman times. It is home to the Baalbek temple complex which includes three of the largest and grandest Roman temple ruins: **the Temple of Bacchus** and the **Temple of Jupiter** and the **Temple of Venus**, equivalents of the Canaanite deities Hadad, Atargatis. In Islamic mythology, temple complex was said to have been a palace of Solomon's, which was built by djinn and given as a wedding gift to the Queen of Sheba. It was inscribed in 1984 as an UNESCO World Heritage site. There is also the Wall of the Old City and the Quarry.

Also visit the **Umayyad Great Mosque** located in front of the entrance to the Roman archaeological site, the Great

Mosque dates from the Umayyad period (early eight-century). It was built on a Roman forum, which was later transformed into a Byzantine church. Some of the granite and limestone columns of these earlier constructions are still clearly visible. After the visit return to *Hotel* for dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**



Friday, October 04

Zahle' - Tripoli



After breakfast, begin the day with a drive to the **Cedars**, one of Lebanon's most beautiful nature reserves and home to the oldest cedar forest. Enjoy the view of the thousands year old Cedars grown at an elevation of 1,800 meters. Then continue to **Bcharre**, which is the birthplace of the famous poet, painter, and sculptor **Gibran Khalil Gibran**. In his home, discover his art and get the opportunity to see his personal belongings, his private library, and his manuscripts. Continue our journey to **Balamand**, a monastery of the Greek Orthodox Church of Antioch founded in 1157 by the Cistercian monks from France. In the late afternoon continue the drive to **Tripoli**, and upon arrival, transfer to the *Via Mina Hotel* for check-in, dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**



Saturday, October 05

Tripoli



Tripoli was the port city of Damascus; military port of the Arab Navy, a prosperous commercial and shipbuilding center; a wealthy principality under the Kutama Ismaili Shia Banu Ammar emirs. **Citadel of**

Raymond de Saint-Gilles, also known as Tripoli Citadel or **Qalaat Sanjil**, is a historical Crusaders citadel located in Tripoli, North Governorate, Lebanon. It was built in 1103 AD by **Raymon De Saint-Gilles** (Raymond IV, Count of Toulouse), ruler of Tripoli and one of the leaders of the First Crusade. During the Mamluk era, the castle was burned in 1289 and later restored by the governor of Tripoli, Saif al-Din Asnad Markuji. The castle was also restored by Ottomans during the reign of Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent. **The Grand Mansouri Mosque** is one of the most important parts of historic Mamluk Tripoli. It was begun by Sultan Al-Ashraf Khalil in 1294 AD, five years after his father, Sultan Al-Mansur Qalawun, defeated the Crusaders and conquered the city in 1289. **The Lion Tower** is a small fortress located at the far eastern end of the Tripoli harbor in North Lebanon. The tower was named after the relief decorations depicting lions that used to line the façade. The structure dates back to the end of the fifteenth century and is attributed to Mameluke Sultan Qaitbay. Return to the *Hotel* for dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**



Sunday, October 06

Tripoli - Byblos



After breakfast, take a leisurely bus trip down south along the Mediterranean coast visiting castles and towns. Visit **Anfeh**, which is occupied mainly in prehistoric times, from the Lower Paleolithic to the Chalcolithic, the Bronze Age, and later in the Byzantine and Crusader periods. During the medieval period, Anfeh was conquered by the Frankish armies, likely around 1109, in the aftermath of the fall of the city of Tripoli. **Nephtin**, as it was then called, became a lordship of the county of Tripoli with the town Tripoli being the main political and economic center.

The **Mseilha Fort** is a fortification situated north of the village of Hamat in Lebanon. The current fort was built by Emir Fakhreddine II in the 17th century to guard the route from Tripoli to Beirut.

Batroun is likely the "Batruna" mentioned in the Amarna letters dating to the 14th century BC. Batroun was mentioned by the ancient geographers Strabo, Pliny, Ptolemy, Stephanus of Byzantium, and Hierocles. Theophanes the Confessor called the city Bostrys. Batroun is said to have been founded by Ithobaal I (Ethbaal), king of Tyre, whose daughter was Jezebel (897-866 BC.) married Ahab. At Batroun we visit the old city souk (19th century), and the Venetian Wall on the harbour.

Smar Jbeil is built on a strategic hill, showing from its western side, the Mediterranean coast from Byblos to Tripoli. The Roman troops conquered the village under the leadership of Pompey the Great, during his Eastern campaign in 63 BC. The castle was built in the 12th century by the Crusaders, and it offers stunning views of the surrounding countryside. Continue the drive to Byblos, stroll around Byblos souks and then transfer to *Sur mer Hotel* or similar for check-in, dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**



Monday, October 07

Byblos



After breakfast, continue exploring Byblos by visiting **Byblos Castle**, also Castle of Gibelet, is a historical castle built by the Crusaders in the 12th century AD over the ruins of a Roman structure. It was inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1984. We visit other Byblos Archaeological sites, including **Royal Necropolis** of Byblos, a group of nine Bronze Age underground shaft and chamber tombs housing the sarcophagi of several kings of the city. The Temple of **Baalat Gebal** is an important Bronze Age temple structure in the World Heritage Site of Byblos. The temple was dedicated to Ba'alat Gebal, the goddess of the city of Byblos, known later to the Greeks as Atargatis. Built in 2800 BC it was the largest and most important sanctuary in ancient Byblos. The Temple of the **Obelisks** was constructed around 1600 BC on top of the L-shaped temple. Late

afternoon visit Byblos **Old Town and Souks**. Return to the *Hotel* for dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**



Tuesday October 08

Byblos - Beirut



Begin the day with a visit to the famous natural touristic features of Lebanon, **Jeita Grotto**, a system of two interconnected caves. It is the longest cave existing in the Middle East and is considered to be a pride of Lebanon. We visit the Maronite **Church, Bkerke** located 650 m above the bay of Jounieh, to meet a representative of **the Maronite Church** for an introduction on the history of Maronites. Then proceed to Harissa and take a cable car up to "**The Lebanon Lady**", where the statue of the Virgin dominates a sanctuary. We will enjoy the panoramic view from the top of the statue. Enjoy lunch at a Lebanese restaurant in the region. We drive back to Beirut and transfer to *Arjaan Hotel* or similar for check-in, dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**



Wednesday, October 09

Beirut - USA



After breakfast, transfer to the airport for your flight to your next destination. **(B)**

*"We reserve the right to change the order of activities or places visited due to unforeseen schedule conflicts
Permissions to visit sites, or in order to make the itinerary run smoothly"*

Tour Cost (Land Only):

7-10 travelers \$7,495.00

11-15 travelers \$6,995.00

Per person sharing in double occupancy

Single Supplement: \$895.00

Price based on group size minimum of 7 participants and maximum of 15 participants

Trip Grade: II Lodging Level: ****



Tour Includes:

- Airport/Hotel/Airport transfers.
- Accommodation at mentioned hotels or similar in centrally located area.
- Meals as per the itinerary (B: Breakfast, L: Lunch and D: Dinner).
- Travel by private modern & air-conditioned coach.
- Mineral water in vehicle during tours.
- Entrance fees to all mentioned sites and museums mentioned.
- All activities as described in the tour.
- English Speaking guide.
- Gratuities to guide, drivers, and porters.

Trip Grade: II Easy – Reasonably paced sightseeing, easy walking. No physical changes.

Lodging Level:

★★★★ Luxury: Regular style - usually large hotels, typical western standard with ample venues and full amenities

Tour does not include:

- International airfare USA - Beirut - USA.
- Items of personal nature (camera fees at sites, laundry, excess luggage, etc.).
- Beverages or any alcoholic drinks with or without meals and any meals not mentioned.
- Transfers if not arriving/departing on tour dates.
- Dayroom/overnights necessitated by changes in airline schedules or misconnections.
- Travel protection insurance. (Highly recommended).

