

## Lebanon & Jordan Encounters

**Country(ies):** Jordan & Lebanon

**Tour type:** Small Group

**Transport:** A/C car/minibus/coach

**Group size:** Min: 2 | Max: 18

**Days:** 15 Days

**Start location:** Beirut, Lebanon

**End location:** Amman, Jordan

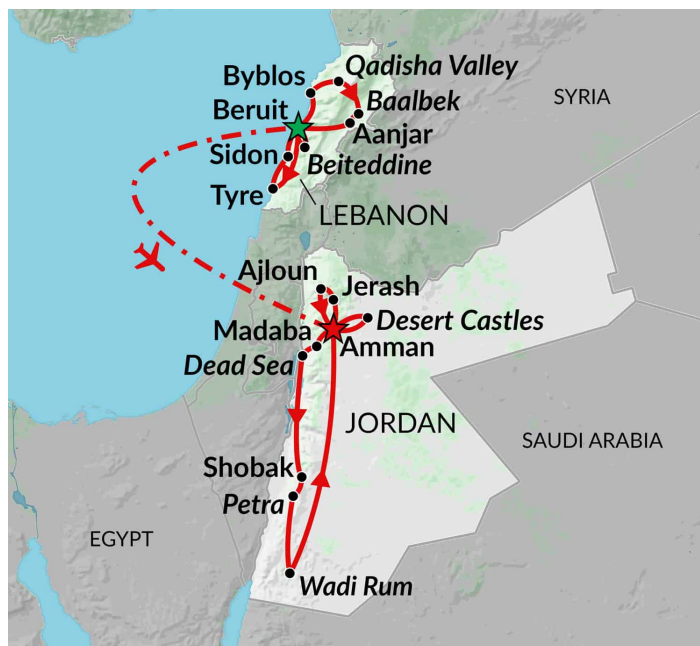
**Departs On:** Saturdays

**Meals:** Breakfasts - 14, Lunches - 2, Dinners - 2

**Highlights:**

Beirut, Beiteddine, Tyre, Sidon, Baalbek, Ksara wine tasting, Cedar Forest, Qadisha Valley, Baatar Gorge & Waterfall, Byblos, Jeita Grotto, Harissa cable car, Petra, Wadi Rum, Desert Castles, Dead Sea, Kerak Castle, Kings Highway

**Places Visited:** Beirut, Beiteddine, Tyre, Sidon, Aanjar, Baalbek, Bcharre, Qadisha Valley, Byblos, Amman, Jerash, Dead Sea, Madaba, Kerak, Petra, Wadi Rum



# Itinerary

## Day 1: Arrive in Beirut, transfer to hotel

Your tour starts with your arrival at Beirut International Airport. Our representative will meet you, and you will be transferred to your hotel. Overnight in Beirut.

**OVERNIGHT:** Beirut hotel

**MEALS:** None

**EXTRAS:** None

## Day 2: Barouk Cedars Nature Reserve, Deir al Qamar & Beiteddine Palace

We leave Beirut after breakfast and today's first destination is Barouk Cedar Nature Reserve, also known as the Al Shouf Cedar Nature Reserve. It is the largest nature reserve in Lebanon and is rich in biodiversity, with 500 species of plants and 32 species of wild mammals calling this sanctuary home. The most famous of course are remnants of Lebanon's ancient cedar forests, mentioned in the Bible. Barouk Cedar Nature Reserve also contains several important archaeological and architectural sites and is classified as an Important Bird Area (IBA), with 200 species.

Next, we drive to the Chouf Mountains to visit the village of Deir al Qamar, its name meaning "Monastery of the Moon". The village is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and was the capital of Lebanon during the 17th century. It is quaint and charming, with stone houses and winding roads.

We then continue onto the beautiful Beiteddine Palace. The palace, constructed in the 19th century by Emir Bashir, is exceptionally well-preserved and is a testament to the opulence of the time. Finally, we return to Beirut to enjoy an evening in the cafes and restaurants of this bustling city.

**OVERNIGHT:** Beirut hotel

**MEALS:** Breakfast

**EXTRAS:** None

## Day 3: Beirut tour, Harissa & Jeita Grotto

We start the today today by touring Beirut, Lebanon's capital and largest city. It is one of the oldest cities in the world, and has had a turbulent history, both ancient and modern. This is evident in the contrast of modern buildings seen alongside small old houses and historical architecture, some still displaying bullet holes and damage from the civil war in the 1970s. Highlights visited include the Beirut Souks, the Corniche, and the downtown region. We will also see the Pigeon Grotto, or the Rock of Raouché, a famous natural formation rising out of the sea.

After leaving Beirut and heading north towards Byblos, we'll experience a thrilling visit to the spectacular Jeita Grotto. Here a system of limestone caves spans a distance of almost 9 kilometres, and contains one of the largest collections of stalactites and stalagmites in the world. It is a symbol of the country and was a finalist in the New 7 Wonders of Nature competition. Depending on the water level you can explore both on foot and by boat.

Next, we visit Harissa, famous for containing an important Christian shrine dedicated to the Virgin Mary, known as Our Lady of Lebanon. We take a cable car to the top of the Basilica, from where we can enjoy a spectacular view of the Bay of Jounieh, considered one of the most beautiful bays in the Middle East. Finally today we arrive in Byblos, another ancient Phoenician city that has been inhabited since 5000 BC. It is known locally as Jbeil and is a UNESCO World Heritage site. Byblos is filled with significant historical and archaeological sites, and also features a lovely Phoenician harbour

**OVERNIGHT:** Byblos hotel

**MEALS:** Breakfast

**EXTRAS:** None

## Day 4: Byblos, Baatara Gorge Sinkhole

We spend this morning exploring the harbour area and highlights of Byblos. Then, we'll pack up and head inland to visit the unique Baatara Gorge sinkhole, where during the spring and especially rainy periods a 255-metre waterfall cascades into an enormous cavern known as the Baatara Pothole. The cave is also called the Cave of the Three Bridges, for the three natural stone arches over which the waterfall drops. This is a spectacular natural phenomenon and we have time for a short hike here, and can also explore nearby Douma Village. A traditional Lebanese lunch is included today.

The day finishes with a short drive to the beautiful Qadisha Valley where we spend the night in the Monastery of St. Anthony, in a separate building with simple but comfortable en-suite accommodation (a nearby guesthouse will be used if the monastery is closed to visitors or unavailable).

**OVERNIGHT:** Qozhaya Monastery or guesthouse

**MEALS:** Breakfast

**EXTRAS:** None

## Day 5: Qadisha Valley, Cedars Ski Resort & Becharre

Those interested may rise early this morning to join morning prayers with the monks of the monastery. After breakfast, we have time to explore the Qadisha Valley, another UNESCO World Heritage Site. It is known as the Holy Valley, and the Holy River, Nahr Qadisha, flows through it. Many caves are found along its steep cliffs, used as shelters and burial sites in ancient times, and it's a great place for a short morning hike.

Our first stop after leaving the valley is the nearby village of Becharre, the birthplace of the iconic novelist and poet of Lebanon, Kahlil Gibran. The village contains a museum dedicated to him, featuring his paintings and manuscripts. Next, we stop at the Cedars Ski Resort, famous for skiing and snowboarding. The area known as the Cedars of God is found nearby, and contains the last remaining groves of the cedar forests that once thrived in the region. The famous cedar trees of Lebanon - Cedrus Libani- are mentioned in the Old Testament and are the national symbol of the country.

The afternoon is spent taking a scenic drive across the Col des Cedres (2581m) before descending then down through several sharp switchbacks to the Bekaa Valley, a high plateau between the Mr. Lebanon and Anti Lebanon mountain ranges. We finish the day in the small town of Zahle.

**OVERNIGHT:** Zahle Guesthouse

**MEALS:** Breakfast

**EXTRAS:** None

## Day 6: Baalbeck, Anjar & Ksara Caves

Today we head to Baalbek, a definite highlight of any visit to Lebanon. Called "Heliopolis" or "City of the Sun" by the Romans and Greeks, it is home to a famous temple complex that is superbly well-preserved. This complex, which is one of the finest examples of Roman architecture at its peak, was built as a sanctuary dedicated to worshipping the Heliopolitan triad of gods - Jupiter, Venus, and Mercury. Pilgrims would flock to the temple in their thousands in order to venerate the triad. Still largely intact, the temple has outstanding artistic and historical value.

We then visit the Umayyad city of Anjar, located in the Bekaa Valley. Founded in the 8th century by Caliph Walid, it provides evidence of excellent town-planning and features mosques, palaces, and baths. It also features 600 shops,

indicating that it was an important commercial centre.

The last stop of the day is at Ksara Caves, where we find perhaps the oldest winery in Lebanon. The caves are approximately two miles long and have been used for centuries as cellars to store wine. We enjoy a guided tour of the caves and the winery, followed by a wine tasting where you can sample, (and later purchase if you wish) some of the finest wine in Lebanon.

**OVERNIGHT:** Beirut hotel

**MEALS:** Breakfast

**EXTRAS:** None

## Day 7: Tyre & Sidon

Today we tour the south of Lebanon. We begin by visiting Tyre, also known as Sour in Arabic. It is more than 4,000 years old and was a great ancient Phoenician city. Tyre is filled with important historical landmarks and is currently a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Our next destination is Sidon, or Saida, also an ancient Phoenician city, possibly the oldest. The city became wealthy due to its excellent production of glass, as well as a purple dye extracted from murex, a type of shellfish. It is now a fast-growing city, and important both administratively and commercially.

In Saida, we will visit the Crusader Sea Castle, the great Mosque, Khan el Franj, and other interesting sites. You will also get the chance to stroll through the old souks. Overnight in Beirut.

**OVERNIGHT:** Beirut hotel

**MEALS:** Breakfast

**EXTRAS:** None

## Day 8: Fly to Amman, free time

Your time is free today until we transfer you to the airport for your flight to Amman in Jordan to start the next leg of your tour. The Beirut (BEY) to Amman (AMM) flight is not included in the price of the tour, but can either be built into your main international flight ticket or purchased separately as a single ticket. Direct flights are available with Middle Eastern Airlines and Royal Jordanian. On arrival into Amman you will be met and transferred to your hotel in the centre of Amman.

**OVERNIGHT:** Amman hotel

**MEALS:** Breakfast

**EXTRAS:** None

## Day 9: Exploring Jordan's Desert Castles and an Amman city tour

Your first full day of our Jordan tour starts after breakfast, as we make our way to Jordan's famous 'desert castles', before we head out on a city tour of its capital - Amman.

Jordan's desert castles are located on the old trade routes created during the Umayyad era and still house some of its ancient remnants including frescoes, bath houses and wells - giving us great insight into how they were built during the 7th and 8th centuries. We'll explore the desert castles of Qasr al-Kharrana, Qal'at al-Azraq and Qseir Amra before we head back to Amman for lunch at a local eatery, with falafel and hummus on the menu.

After lunch, we'll explore downtown Amman on foot, visiting the impressive Amphitheatre, the Jordan Folklore Museum as well as the Citadel. We'll also visit some of Amman's busy markets, tasting Knafeh - a tasty sweet - while our guide teaches us some basic Arabic greetings and phrases to use during our Jordan tour.

If there's time left, we may visit a few traditional handcraft and art galleries, before we return to our hotel in Amman.

**OVERNIGHT:** Amman hotel

**MEALS:** Breakfast, Lunch

**EXTRAS:** None

## Day 10: From Jerash to Ajloun Castle & Dolmens hike

Leaving Amman this morning, we head north to the ancient city of Jerash - known for being one of the largest and well-preserved Greco-Roman cities outside of Europe. Once we arrive in Jerash, we'll visit the Forum, explore its Roman colonnaded streets, the Nymphaeum and the Temple of Artemis - built on one of the highest points in the city.

From Jerash, we'll make our way to Ajloun Castle, built by the Ayyubids in the 12th century and extended by the Mamluks in the 13th. It also served as the base for Saladin's Arab forces when he defeated the Crusaders in the 12th century. The countryside of the Ajloun Forest Reserve around the castle is picturesque and green and a popular place for avid hikers, with its hills, mountains and forests just waiting to be explored.

After a visit to Ajloun Castle, we head to the village of Rasoun to meet our homestay hosts for the night. After settling in and being shown through the village, we'll walk through hills covered with scrub and forest to see some Bronze Age Dolmens - which are megalithic tombs formed by placing a huge stone slab atop two or more standing stones.

We'll return to our homestay in Rasoun this evening, where we'll be treated to a home-cooked traditional Arabic meal which will be prepared by our host Jordanian family, and we spend the evening chatting with them about life in Jordan.

**OVERNIGHT:** Rasoun homestay

**MEALS:** Breakfast, Dinner

**EXTRAS:** None

## Day 11: From Ajloun to Madaba, Mount Nebo & the Dead Sea

After a splendid night with the Jordanian family, we say goodbye after a shared breakfast and head south to Madaba, where we'll marvel at the Byzantine mosaics and the 'Madaba Map' - which is the oldest preserved map of the Holy Land. From Madaba, we'll make our way to Mount Nebo, the place where the prophet Moses looked across the Promised Land and is also his burial place. On a clear day, which is most of the time, you get great views towards Jericho and beyond from here.

After a tasty lunch, we'll make our way down to our resort right on the banks of the Dead Sea, where you have some free time to swim - or rather float - in its incredibly salty waters and to relax by the hotel pool. Don't forget a newspaper or magazine for your iconic Dead Sea photo!

**OVERNIGHT:** Dead Sea Spa Resort

**MEALS:** Breakfast

**EXTRAS:** None

## Day 12: Exploring Dana Biosphere Reserve & Shobak Castle en-route to Petra

Today, we'll make our way down the Dead Sea coastline, passing lots of deep canyons and gorges as they meet the sea. After we pass some salt flats at the southern end of the Dead Sea we head up through the mountains towards Petra, stopping for a short walk in the beautiful scenery and hills of the Dana Biosphere Reserve along the way. This is Jordan's largest nature reserve, and there are great views of the valleys and hills on the various trails around the restored Dana village. Spring is a particularly lovely time to visit with the terrain surprisingly green and full of flowers. We'll stop for lunch and take a walk before continuing to the imposing crusader castle at Shobak, finally arriving at Petra in the evening.

You have the option for a spectacular and atmospheric introduction to Petra tonight, with the Petra by Night tour. Here you walk through the Siq to the Treasury, the whole way being atmospherically lit up by hundreds of candles.

**OVERNIGHT:** Petra hotel

**MEALS:** Breakfast

**EXTRAS:** None

## Day 13: A full day in Petra and overnight Wadi Rum Bedouin Camp

Today is all about exploring the Nabatean site of Petra. It was once the ancient capital of the Nabataean commercial empire until the Romans finally took over in 106AD. For a long period of time, Petra was forgotten - except by the local Bedouins - before it was rediscovered in 1812 by Swiss explorer Johann Ludwig Burckhardt. Petra can be found at the edge of the Wadi Aruba desert, where canyon walls and towering hills make it virtually impossible to reach, except via a narrow cleft in the rock, known as the Siq. There are very few free-standing buildings in Petra, as the Nabateans chose to carve their dwellings into the multi coloured sandstone cliffs. Petra has become one of Jordan's main tourist attractions and the Jordanian Government is well aware of this. The tourism infrastructure in the adjoining village of Wadi Musa is booming, though, thankfully, once you enter through the Siq, the site is protected, there aren't that many touts or souvenir sellers, and all the building feels miles away.

We have most of the day available today to explore this ancient city (2-3 hour guided tour, then free time to explore independently). We start by making our way through the Siq, which rises to 200 metres above us and narrows to just 2 metres wide in certain sections. Keep an eye out for the ancient Nabatean water channel which is still visible on one wall and there are remnants of the terracotta pipes that brought water into the city as well. We'll turn a corner and suddenly - one of the most familiar sights of Petra will be in front of you - The Khazneh (Treasury) comes into view. Our guide will explain how this, and the other buildings here, are mainly elaborate facades carved into the rock from the top down, and also discuss the spiritual significance of the building style.

From the Treasury, the valley opens out, and you'll see tombs carved into the rock on both sides. You'll get a glimpse of the ruined Roman amphitheatre and colonnaded streets and during your free time, you can walk up a steep and narrow winding gorge to the towering 'Monastery' - which is 50 metres high and 45 metres wide, giving you breath-taking views of the Wadi Aruba desert and the Jordan Valley. Another climb takes you to the High Place of Sacrifice, and Lion Fountain. All in all, this is a full and tiring exercise, but hugely rewarding day touring one of the world's most famous ancient sites.

Walking distances today are an absolute minimum of 3km through the Siq to the Treasury and back and to see a few tombs, 8km to take the trail on as far as the main basin, plus an additional few km to the Monastery and back (over 800 steps up and down). For those with less mobility or who are worried about the distance, horse carriages are available for around 20JD (USD 28) to take you on the 1.2km journey through the Siq to the Treasury and back again at an agreed time. They will also take you further in through the site for an extra fee. We do not recommend riding the horses that are available. Donkeys are available for the steps up to the Monastery - if you want to use them, we'd recommend doing this on the way up, not on the way down.

Later in the afternoon, we leave Petra and drive into the spectacular desert scenery of Wadi Rum where friendly Bedouin hosts are ready to greet us at a comfortable camp beneath the towering rocks and cliffs. We spend the evening and night relaxing at the camp, watching the stars and enjoying a delicious traditional Jordanian meal.

**OVERNIGHT:** Wadi Rum Bedouin Camp

**MEALS:** Breakfast, Dinner

**EXTRAS:** None

## **Day 14: A jeep safari and Bedouin experience in Wadi Rum, travel to Amman**

After breakfast in the camp, we take a jeep safari through the sands and beneath the towering 'jebels' of Wadi Rum, stopping to climb sand dunes and to see some of the strange rock formations, including a spectacular rock bridge.

We'll also do some local activities inspired from the Bedouin traditions, walking with a local shepherd with his sheep and goats to a Bedouin tent where we'll participate in making lunch.

We can also join in and learn about other traditional Bedouin activities such as shearing the sheep & goats' hair, milking, grinding grains, making bread and roasting coffee until our lunch is ready. Finally, after really getting a feel for nomadic Bedouin life, we return by jeep to our camp and then drive north on the Desert Highway back to Amman. If you would like to add a few days to your tour and spend some time by the Red Sea, then an extension to Aqaba is available after you finish in Wadi Rum.

This evening we'll walk out to a coffee shop or cafe near our hotel in Downtown Amman to enjoy a shisha, a game of backgammon and to reminisce on our Jordan tour.

**OVERNIGHT:** Amman hotel

**MEALS:** Breakfast, Lunch

**EXTRAS:** None

## **Day 15: Free time in Amman, hotel to airport transfer included**

Your time is free in Amman today until we pick you up from your hotel and transfer you to the airport for your departure. Further sightseeing tours are available today if you have a late afternoon or evening flight, including a trip to the Baptism Site at Bethany on the Jordan River. This tour also connects well with several of our Egypt and Israel tours; please contact us for ideas and help with connections.

**OVERNIGHT:** N/A

**MEALS:** Breakfast

**EXTRAS:** Extra day in Amman - post-tour - Standard level

## **Included**

- 5 nights in 3 to 4-star hotels in Beirut & Byblos
- 1 night in guesthouse/hotel in Zahle
- 1 night in monastery accommodation in Qadisha Valley
- 4 nights in 3 to 4-star hotels in Jordan
- 1 night in Jordanian homestay in Rasoun
- 1 night in comfortable Bedouin Camp in Wadi Rum
- 24-hour airport arrival & departure transfer service
- All transport and transfers in AC vehicles
- All sightseeing tours as detailed in the itinerary
- Wine tasting in Ksara Caves
- Lebanon entrance fees
- English speaking guide for all tours
- 4x4 jeep safari and Bedouin experience in Wadi Rum
- Meals as indicated in the itinerary

## Excluded

- International flights (available on request)
- International flight between Beirut and Amman (available on request)
- Visa fees (Lebanon - free on arrival for most nationalities, Jordan - available free as part of the Jordan Pass)
- Jordan Entrance fees (discounted package included in the Jordan Pass, available in advance for JD70)
- Travel insurance (compulsory, [available from Encounters Travel](#))
- Meals not indicated in the itinerary
- Hotel gala dinner supplements if applied on Christmas & New Year's Eve
- Drinks, snacks and other personal expenses (e.g. laundry)
- Tips
- Any other items not mentioned above

## Notes

### Winter route adjustment:

During the winter months (normally from December until sometime in May), many mountain roads in Lebanon are closed due to snow. During this period the tour will be adjusted to avoid the drive from Becharre to Zahle across the Col des Cedres. All the same places will be visited and the same activities included, but the itinerary will run as follows...

Days 1-2 - As above

Day 3 - Morning Beirut City Tour, then head to the Baatara Gorge to see the sinkhole, before finishing at the Qadisha Valley. Lunch included, and overnight at the Monastery or nearby guesthouse.

Day 4 - Morning hike in the Qadisha Valley, visit Becharre and the Cedars, then return to Byblos for overnight.

Day 5 - Explore Byblos, then drive to Zahle via Beirut, with stops on the way to discover Harissa by cable car, and to explore the Jeita Grotto. Overnight in Zahle

Days 6-8 - as above

# Options

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Our tours are designed to include all that you need to enjoy a really special time in the destination you're visiting.

However, we do also offer some extra options to complement the tour and add some additional sightseeing or activities, or some extra time at either end of the tour.

All accommodation based options (e.g. Single supplements, extra nights, cruise upgrades) should be booked and paid for in advance so that we can make the appropriate arrangements.

Other options may either be booked and paid for in advance or while you are on the tour, though we recommend booking in advance to ensure there are no issues with availability.

Many options are priced the same throughout the year, but some may incur single or high season supplements - full details are given on the tour reservation form or on request.

## Extra day in Amman - post-tour

**Min numbers:** 1

This option adds an extra day to the end of your tour, staying in the same hotel as the main tour itself (subject to availability). Your airport arrival transfer is still included. Prices shown are per person and based on two people sharing. Note: Single room and peak season supplements apply.

**Price:** Starting from - \$60

## Wadi Mujib Day Trip - Siq Trail

**Min numbers:** 1

Escape the hustle and bustle of Amman for a real adventure, exploring the canyons of Wadi Mujib, following the famous Siq Trail. Leaving Amman, we'll drive around 90 minutes to the shores of the Dead Sea where our journey along the Siq Trail begins from the Wadi Mujib visitors centre. Descending down into the gorge we enter the Wadi Mujib Nature Reserve where between months of April and October it's possible to take an exciting hike through the shallow waters that fill the gorge. Along the way you'll climb up small waterfalls where steps have being installed to make it easier, until eventually you'll reach the end of the gorge where you can relax beneath a large waterfall. The entire hike generally takes 2 to 3 hours roundtrip. We highly recommend bringing along a dry-bag (so your camera or mobile phone don't get wet) and water shoes. It is possible to hire a dry bag at the visitors centre for around US\$7.00 and purchase water shoes for US\$7.00). Note: On most tours it's necessary to add an extra night pre or post-tour to have enough time to take this tour. If you have a late departure on your final day however, it may be possible to visit Wadi Mujib on your departure day.

**Price:** Starting from - \$145

## Single room supplement

**Min numbers:** 1

The tour price is based on 2 people sharing twin/double rooms. This option books a single room in all the accommodation throughout the tour. If you are a single traveller and would be happy to share a room, let us know and we will see if we can pair you up with another single traveller of the same sex. If a room share is not available when you book then we will add the single room supplement to your booking and it will be payable with your balance payment unless we have arranged a room share for you by then. If a room share is arranged after you have paid the supplement then we will refund it to you. Room shares are arranged in order of booking. Note: Single supplement prices may vary seasonally.

**Price:** Starting from - \$720

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## 1. Accommodation

### Lebanon:

This tour uses a mix of accommodation including good quality 4-star hotels in Beirut and Byblos, a comfortable guesthouse Zahle and rooms in a separate new block at Monastery of St. Anthony in Qozhaya. Rooms at the monastery are simple but comfortable and en-suite and you may join the monks for their morning prayers.

Accommodation is based on twin or double en-suite rooms with air conditioning. Please visit the accommodation tab of this tour for examples of the hotels normally used on this tour. These are subject to change to alternative properties of a similar standard. If you have any specific accommodation requests please let us know and we'll be happy to provide you with a customised quotation for a private tour.

### Jordan:

The hotels used on this tour are rated at the Jordanian 3 and 4-star level. Local star ratings may vary from international standards but we ensure we use some of the best hotels available at the level stated. We have also aimed to use hotels in Amman that have a better location than most, with a range of cafes and restaurants within easy walking distance. Accommodation is based on twin or double en-suite rooms with air conditioning. All couples will have a private double room.

A friendly local homestay is included for one night in Rasoun village. Accommodation is in shared rooms holding up to 4 people. There are a number of homes in the village that will accommodate guests, so depending on our final group size we may split across several houses. We will all eat together in one house with the hosts, who will also provide a tour of the village. All beds and bedding are provided. Bathrooms are separate and shared but quite basic. Overall you can expect a simple but comfortable, and very welcoming experience with good food and interesting insights into local village life in rural Jordan.

In Wadi Rum we use a Bedouin camp located inside the Wadi Rum Protected Area. Accommodation is in permanent traditional goat hair tents with proper beds and all bedding provided. Bathrooms are separate, though some en-suite tents are also available and subject to availability you can upgrade to these locally if you wish. You can also bring a sleeping bag if you wish, and find a sheltered spot on the rocks on the edge of the camp and sleep under the stars.

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## 2. Transport

Our trips feature a mix of different transport options. We want you to feel like you're really experiencing the country you're travelling through, but at the same time we want you to finish journeys refreshed enough to enjoy the next stage of the tour. Our routes in Lebanon/Jordan and the small distances involved mean that we use private vehicles throughout this tour. Vehicles will be selected to be comfortable for the number of travellers in the group.

The jeeps used in Wadi Rum are provided by the local Bedouins we work with, and while suitable for your desert safari, they may fall below the normal safety and quality standards for vehicles we use during the rest of our tours.

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## 3. Transfers

Your airport transfers are only included on the first and last day of the set tour itinerary, plus on any additional days if you book your hotel room with us. If you make your own arrangements for additional accommodation at either the beginning or the end of the tour then you will need to arrange your own airport transfers on these days.

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## 4. Lebanon Winter Route Changes

### Winter route adjustment:

During the winter months (normally from December until sometime in May), many mountain roads in Lebanon are

closed due to snow. During this period the tour will be adjusted to avoid the drive from Becharre to Zahle across the Col des Cedres. All the same places will be visited and the same activities included, but the itinerary will run as follows...

Days 1-2 - As in summer

Day 3 - Morning Beirut City Tour, then head to the Baatara Gorge to see the sinkhole, before finishing at the Qadisha Valley. Lunch included, and overnight at the Monastery or nearby guesthouse.

Day 4 - Morning hike in the Qadisha Valley, visit Becharre and the Cedars, then return to Byblos for overnight.

Day 5 - Explore Byblos, then drive to Zahle via Beirut, with stops on the way to discover Harissa by cable car, and to explore the Jeita Grotto. Overnight in Zahle

Days 6 onwards - as in summer

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## 5. International Flights including Beirut to Amman

We want to give you as much flexibility as possible when it comes to booking your holiday with us. So, to take account of people with varying travel plans, we don't include your international flights in the main tour price. We are however very happy to suggest flights to go with the tour. Please contact us with your preferred dates and departure airport and we'll give you a selection of airlines, times and fares to choose from.

Your airport arrival & departure transfers are included on the first and last days of the tour.

This tour starts in Beirut (BEY) and ends in Amman (AMM). You will also need to arrange a flight between Beirut and Amman to link together the two sections of this tour. This can either be purchased as a single ticket (for example with Middle East Airlines), or as part of your overall international flight ticket. Your airport transfers are included at both ends and you may fly at any time during the day.

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## 6. Group Size/Tour Leaders/Guides

Our **small-group tours** in Lebanon and Jordan run with a minimum of 2 and maximum of 18 travellers in the group.

**Tailor-made tours** are priced based on 2 people travelling. Discounts and customised quotations will be provided if you are travelling in a larger party.

In Lebanon we provide fully trained, local English-speaking guides for all of the sightseeing tours.

In Jordan we provide an English speaking local tour leader/driver and specialist guides in Jerash, Amman and Petra. Groups of 6 or more will have both a driver and a professional guide throughout the trip. At Encounters Travel we aim to only use local guides and reps. We feel this gives you the best experience of the country and the sites you are seeing.

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## 7. Entrance Fees & Jordan Pass

### Lebanon:

The tour price includes entrance fees to all the tourist sites mentioned in the itinerary. If you visit any sites not mentioned in the itinerary then you will need to cover the entrance fee costs.

### Jordan:

The tour price does not include entrance fees to the sites visited on the tour whilst in Jordan.

We strongly recommend that you purchase a **Jordan Pass** prior to your travel to Jordan. This is a special package that has been designed by the Jordanian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities for tourists visiting Jordan. As well as including a discounted package of entrance fees covering all the sites in Jordan that you will visit on this tour (plus many others), the Jordan Pass also provides free downloadable digital brochures on each attraction, plus a free

tourist visa for entering the country (40JD if obtained on arrival in Jordan).

The cost for the **Jordan Wanderer Pass** suitable for this tour is JD70 (approx. US\$99). Passes are available by completing a simple online form before you travel, taking care to make sure your passport details are entered correctly as this doubles as your visa application. Your Jordan Pass will then be emailed to you as a pdf document, which you should print out and bring with you. You will then need to show this print out at the immigration desk on arrival in Jordan to obtain your free entry visa, and also at each attraction where it will be scanned to confirm your entry. [Obtain your Jordan Pass here](#)

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## 8. Tipping

Tipping is common practice in Lebanon and Jordan, as a sign of appreciation for services provided. You may therefore wish to tip your guide and driver at the end of the tour. You should not feel obliged to tip any particular amount, and should consider your personal budget. We are often asked to provide a guide however, and can suggest that approx. USD 3-5 per person per day for your driver and USD 3-8 per person per day for your guide would be appropriate.

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## 9. Health and Vaccinations

You should ensure you are fully insured for medical emergencies including emergency evacuation and repatriation.

Recommended vaccinations and other health protection measures vary according to the country you are visiting and where you are travelling from. We recommend you contact your GP/medical practitioner or a travel clinic for current information on vaccinations needed for your destination. You should ensure that you are up to date with vaccines and boosters recommended for your normal life at home, including for example, vaccines required for occupational risk of exposure, lifestyle risks and underlying medical conditions.

In addition, additional courses or boosters normally recommended for the countries in this region are:

Egypt: Tetanus, Typhoid, Hepatitis A

Jordan: Tetanus, Hepatitis A

Israel: Hepatitis A, Poliomyelitis

Lebanon: Diphtheria, Hepatitis A

Malaria is not generally present unless it has been contracted abroad; you do not need to take malaria prophylactics.

More information is available here: [Egypt](#), [Jordan](#), [Israel](#), [Lebanon](#)

Note: We are aware of some places in Egypt using 'black henna' instead of pure brown henna. Black henna contains a chemical dye PPD (paraphenylenediamine) which can result in severe allergic reactions and resultant scarring. To be safe we recommend avoiding any henna tattoos while in Egypt unless you are certain they are using pure brown henna.

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## 10. Passports and Visas - Jordan

Passports should be valid for at least six months after your departure from the country. Please do not bring an almost full or almost expired passport. Visa arrangements are the responsibility of the traveller, and requirements are subject to change by the local authorities.

To promote tourism to the country, the Jordanian government has designed the **Jordan Pass**. This provides adults of most nationalities with a free single entry Jordan visa (for stays of 3 nights or more), a discounted package of entrance fees, and free digital brochures for the various sites in Jordan. Please check the Jordan Pass tour note for more information.

Double or multi entry visas for Jordan are no longer available and you will need to arrange two visas if you are doing a combination tour (eg. with Egypt and/or Israel) that visits Jordan more than once. Exceptions may occur if you are crossing to and from Israel via the King Hussein Bridge - please contact us for details.

If you wish to arrange your visa separately in advance, or if your stay will be shorter than four days/3 nights, then a visa fee of 40JD (approx. USD 57) will be due.

Families with children under 12 are recommended not to purchase the Jordan Pass for the children as entrance fees are not charged in Jordan for children under 12. Instead, the adults should purchase a Jordan Pass and we will arrange a free visa for the children which you will receive when we meet you on arrival into Amman airport.

Other nationalities may require a visa prior to arrival and to obtain this in advance, please contact your local Jordanian embassy or consulate or a visa agency for details. In addition, if you plan to enter Jordan via the southern Wadi Araba crossing (Eilat-Aqaba) or the Allenby Bridge/King Hussein border with Israel in the north, you will need to obtain your Jordan visa in advance as these are not available on arrival at the border.

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## **11. Passports and Visas - Lebanon**

Passports should be valid for at least six months after your departure from the country. Please do not bring an almost full or almost expired passport. Visa arrangements are the responsibility of the traveller, and requirements are subject to change by the local authorities.

For many nationalities visiting Lebanon a visa on arrival is possible at Beirut International Airport. This applies to most countries of the Commonwealth, European Union, Russia, Japan and the US continent. Even if you are eligible for a visa on arrival, it is prudent to check up to date requirements with your nearest Lebanese consulate.

Other nationalities may require a visa prior to arrival and to obtain this in advance, please contact your local Lebanese embassy or consulate or a visa agency for details.

**IMPORTANT:** The Government of Lebanon denies entry to Israeli passport holders, Israeli visa holders (valid or expired) and those with any evidence of travel to Israel within their passport.

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## **12. Time**

The time in Egypt, Jordan, Israel and Lebanon is GMT plus 2 hours and in UAE GMT plus 3 hours. Daylight saving adjustments have historically been applied in some years but not others. At present it appears that there will be no daylight saving changes in Egypt 2016 and beyond, though this may change at short notice (with a resulting impact on flight times and schedules). In Jordan and Israel, daylight saving of one hour is generally applied between the end of March and the end of October, making it GMT plus 3 hours. Exact dates vary from year to year and sometimes the changes may be scrapped altogether.

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## **13. Voltage**

Sockets are two round pronged and 220 volts (Type C). Universal adaptors are available in most airport shops if you don't have one already. Standard European adapters will work fine, though sometimes they may feel a little loose in the sockets. All hotel rooms have electrical sockets where you can re-charge cameras, phones etc. Hair dryers are normally available on request from the hotel reception if not in your room already.

If you have US appliances (110 volts) you will need a voltage converter as well as a plug adapter.

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## **14. Money - Lebanon**

The local currency in Lebanon is the Lebanese Pound (called Lira). You do not need to arrange to bring any Lebanese currency with you as exchange facilities are available in the international airports and in most hotels, banks and bureau de changes in major towns. You should try to obtain and keep hold of small denomination notes or coins on you during the tour as these are useful for toilets, tips and small purchases. ATMs are readily available in major towns and many local shops will accept VISA/Mastercard or Amex, but may charge additional fees - check before you pay. Travellers cheques are not recommended as they can not be changed in many places now, and can incur high fees.

Due to the huge recent devaluation of the Lebanese currency, if you withdraw money from an ATM or pay for things with your credit card you will be charged the official bank exchange rate which is very different to the actual operating rate used locally. We therefore recommend that you bring enough US Dollars or Euros in cash with you to cover your required spending money during the tour and do not plan to use your credit card while in Lebanon. You can change this hard currency to Lebanese pounds at the current rates while you are there - please ask your guide for assistance on appropriate places to change your money.

While in Lebanon you will need sufficient funds to cover meals not included in the itinerary, drinks, snacks, souvenirs and personal expenses such as laundry. These should generally all be paid for in local currency, though tips for guides and drivers may be paid in hard currency (GBP, USD, EUR).

It is difficult to recommend a level of personal spending money which will suit everyone as this can differ greatly, but as a guideline, we would suggest allowing USD 25-35 per person per day as a minimum. Allow more if you plan on doing lots of shopping, or buying many alcoholic drinks.

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## 15. Money - Jordan

The local currency in Jordan is the Jordanian Dinar (JD). You do not need to arrange to bring any Jordanian Dinar with you to Jordan as exchange facilities are available in the international airports and in most hotels, banks and bureau de changes in major towns. You should try to obtain and keep hold of small denomination notes or coins on you during the tour as these are useful for toilets, tips and small purchases. ATMs are readily available in major towns and many local shops will accept VISA/Mastercard or Amex, but may charge fees of up to 10% - check before you pay. Travellers cheques are not recommended as they can not be changed in many places now, and can incur high fees.

While in Jordan you will need sufficient funds to cover meals not included in the itinerary, drinks, snacks, souvenirs and personal expenses such as laundry. These should generally all be paid for in Jordanian Dinar, though tips for guides and drivers may be paid in hard currency (GBP, USD, EUR).

It is difficult to recommend a level of personal spending money which will suit everyone as this can differ greatly, but as a guideline, we would suggest allowing USD 15-25 per person per day as a minimum. Allow more if you plan on doing lots of shopping, or buying many alcoholic drinks.

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## 16. What to take

**Luggage:** Suitcases, rucksacks or fabric holdalls are all fine to bring with you on this tour. You should also bring a small daypack/bag to take out during the day. Your main luggage will normally be left in the hotel during your sightseeing trips - you will not need to carry it far, and there are nearly always hotel porters to assist.

**Luggage limits:** There is no luggage limit for this tour. However, most airlines restrict you to between 20kg and 25kg for your hold luggage and between 5kg and 10kg for hand luggage. Please check with your airline before travelling to the airport.

**Clothing:** The climate varies widely from hot days in the summer to cool and sometimes wet days in the winter

months. At night, especially in the deserts, the temperatures can drop quite dramatically. So you must pack for cool conditions. Formal dress (eg. suits & ties) is not required. Modesty rates highly in Jordan, especially for women, so to respect the local culture and people, please ensure all clothes are loose fitting and not revealing. Shorts (not hot-pants) are OK in tourist sites, as are T-shirts, but these should not show too much bare flesh (we suggest that your shoulders should remain covered). When visiting any mosques, legs and arms should be covered.

**Other items:** If your tour includes an overnight Bedouin camp then bedding is provided but we recommend bringing a light sleeping sheet or sleeping bag liner for comfort all year round (even with the best efforts, sand does find its way pretty much everywhere). In the winter months, or if you think you would like to sleep under the stars instead of in your tent, then we recommend you bring a sleeping bag with you as it can get very cold at night. We also recommend you bring a sun hat, sunscreen, sunglasses, a basic first aid kit, toiletries, money belt, small torch, camera & charger.

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## 17. Dates & Prices

Small-group departure dates run regularly all year round, starting on Saturdays. The tour is also available privately on any other dates if our group tour dates don't work for you or if you would prefer to travel in just your own party. Please contact us for more information and prices to fit your preferred dates and number of travellers.

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## 18. Booking & Payment

If you would like to book a place on this tour, please complete the online reservation form on our website (via the Dates & Prices tab on the tour page). You may make a deposit or full payment online, or just hold a reservation if you prefer (full payments are due 8 weeks before departure). We will then contact you with more details about how to complete your booking. Payments may be made by debit or credit card (subject to a card processing fee), or by making a bank transfer, or posting us a cheque/bank draft. Full details will be provided in your booking confirmation email. Please [contact us](#) if you would like any more information or have any questions before making a booking.

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## 19. Travel Insurance

Travel insurance is compulsory on all of our tours and needs to cover personal accident & liability, medical expenses and repatriation, travel delay & abandonment. We also strongly recommend that you take out cover against cancellation and lost/stolen baggage. Personal medical insurance does not normally provide sufficient cover and is generally not suitable for travel on our tours. You will not be able to join your tour if you have not provided us with details of your insurance or if you arrive without cover in place (no refunds will be due in this event). [More information...](#)

You may arrange your own insurance, or you can take advantage of a comprehensive policy that we can arrange for you through Endsleigh Insurance which has been designed to be suitable for our tours. The policy is available to travellers of all nationalities and you do not need to live in the UK to take out the policy. For full details of cover provided, prices and to apply for one of our policies, please complete [travel insurance application form](#).

Note: Any country that borders the Mediterranean is considered as 'Europe' for the purposes of travel insurance (including Turkey, Israel, Egypt and Morocco). If you are doing a tour that visits one country in 'Europe' and one that is 'Worldwide' (for example, an Egypt and Jordan tour), then you need a 'Worldwide' policy. When completing the form you should enter your travel dates including any extra days involved in overnight flights or connecting travel between your home and the tour. Our policies are not able to cover any extra time or activities other than your tour and options booked with us and your travel to & from home.

Note - to comply with insurance sales regulations, our travel insurance policies are only available to customers booking directly with us. If you have booked through a travel agent you will need to arrange your own insurance.

If your tour includes car hire, or if you plan to arrange a hot air balloon flight locally or do some scuba diving during

your tour, you should check the small print in your policy to make sure these are covered (these are covered in our policy). Please also check the maximum altitude that you will be reaching and that full cover including emergency evacuation is provided up to this altitude.

If you are taking expensive camera gear or other electronic equipment with you then please check the coverage and the fine print of your policy to ensure that you have sufficient cover.

*IMPORTANT: We must have your travel insurance details (policy number and type of insurance) before you depart or you may not be allowed to join the tour. If you haven't told us already, please let us know the details when you can. You should take a paper copy of your insurance policy with you as you may be asked to show this at the start of the tour.*

## **Covid-19**

**Before purchasing any travel insurance, please check the coverage provided for situations related to Covid-19, and for the rules about government travel advice. Your normal policy may not be suitable. Details about our own policies cover levels are given [on our website](#).**

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## **20. Financial Security**

We are a UK registered company and are committed to providing our customers with financial protection to provide peace of mind and to allow you to book with confidence.

We have therefore partnered with Trust My Travel Ltd., which provides financial protection services to over 2000 partners around the world. Funds paid to us by our customers are protected via an Insurance policy held by Trust My Travel. Each traveller and the description of services sold is declared against Trust My Travel's insurance policy directly against our financial failure. In the event of our insolvency, you will be refunded for any unfulfilled products and/or repatriation to the UK (where applicable). Please see [our website](#) or [booking conditions](#) for more information.

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## **21. Responsible Tourism**

It is impossible not to have an impact on the local environment, cultures and eco-systems when you travel. However, it is very possible to try and ensure that these impacts are as limited, or positive as possible. We are committed to ensuring that we try to leave our host countries in a better state than we found them and encourage and assist our travellers to help us with this.

The following are a few simple tips that require very little effort on your part but which will help ensure that any effect you have on the locations you visit is positive rather than negative.

- Don't prejudge: Things in different countries will almost certainly be different. That doesn't make them worse or inferior, just different.
- Communicate: Don't expect locals to speak your language. Take the trouble to learn a few words or phrases of the local language. Don't worry about sounding silly. Most locals are patient and accommodating and appreciate you making the effort to communicate in their language.
- Conserve energy: Be careful not to waste valuable resources. Use local resources sparingly. Switch off lights, air-conditioning and fans when you leave the hotel room and don't waste water. Remove superfluous packaging. Many countries have far less efficient waste disposal systems than ours. Remove packaging from newly acquired items before leaving home.
- Don't litter: No matter how untidy or dirty the country you're travelling in may look to you, avoid littering, as there is no need to add to the environment's stress. Many of the countries we visit have a tough challenge dealing with rubbish and waste. Please consider taking home as much plastic waste as you can (e.g. water bottles).
- Choose environmentally friendly products: By using environmentally friendly (bio degradable) sun creams, shampoos and detergents you can help reduce pollution.
- Respect local customs and traditions: As you are a guest in these countries, you should also comply with the local customs. If you are friendly and well mannered, the locals will reciprocate and it will only enhance your

experience. It's important to follow dress and behaviour guidelines especially when visiting religious or sacred sites (your tour leader will advise you how best to do this).

- If a client commits an illegal act the client may be excluded from the tour and Encounters Travel shall cease to have responsibility to/for them. No refund will be given for any unused services.

All porters are employed and equipped following guidelines set by the International Porter Protection Group (IPPG).

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## 22. Follow Us Online

You can stay in touch with us online by following us on Facebook and Twitter. We post updates on relevant travel news in our destination countries, special offers and discounts and other interesting travel related news and information.

[www.facebook.com/encounterstravel](http://www.facebook.com/encounterstravel)

[www.twitter.com/encounterstravl](https://twitter.com/encounterstravl) (yes, without the 'e')

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## 23. Before you travel

It is important when considering and preparing to travel anywhere in the world that you have a good understanding of the country you are visiting, its laws and customs, and the possible risks and situations that may occur. This includes specific risks related to your itinerary (eg. does it involve water & can you swim, are you fit enough for the activities included), as well as more general risks such as terrorism and natural disasters.

General details and links to more information about health risks, visa requirements, money, and travel insurance are given in these tour notes. We recommend that you re-read all these before your departure as well as the small print of your travel insurance policy so you know exactly what is covered and what is not.

You should take copies of your important travel documents with you and ideally also store them online securely as a backup. Make sure that you have given us your emergency contact details and told that person where and when you are travelling. Ensure you take enough money with you and that you have access to emergency funds.

Finally, you should read through and stay updated with the current [official government travel advice](#) for your destination. We are registered partners with the UK Foreign Office's '[Travel Aware](#)' campaign which provides further useful and invaluable information.



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**Note:** Please [download an up-to-date copy](#) of these tour notes shortly before you travel as itineraries and information does change from time to time.

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