

Lebanon Autumn Tour 2022 September 23rd – September 26th Lebanon SAIGA style



INTRODUCTION:

A lot comes to mind when you think of Lebanon: chaos, beauty, excitement, and sadness just to name a few.

This extremely small country has a big story to tell and doesn't disappoint.

We'll base ourselves in Beirut for the entire tour, using this amazing, vibrant city as base from which to explore the rest of the country, from north to south, ancient to modern, and an eclectic mix of things in between.

Lebanon is an extremely small country and it's possible to drive from the southern border to the northern border in three hours, and east to west in an hour, so we'll be staying in Beirut for the whole of this tour. A nice change to having to pack up and move out every morning!

HIGHLIGHTS:

Explore
cosmopolitan
exciting **Beirut**

See the **Hezbollah
Museum** first
hand

Urban exploration
at its best - the
abandoned **World
Fair Site** in Tripoli

Get a photo with
Saddam Hussein
at the **Hall of
Fame Museum**

Excited? Come with SAIGA to Lebanon

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Tour Details:

DATES: September 23rd -
September 26th 2022

PRICE: \$695 USD (twin share)
Single Supplement \$150 USD



INCLUSIONS:

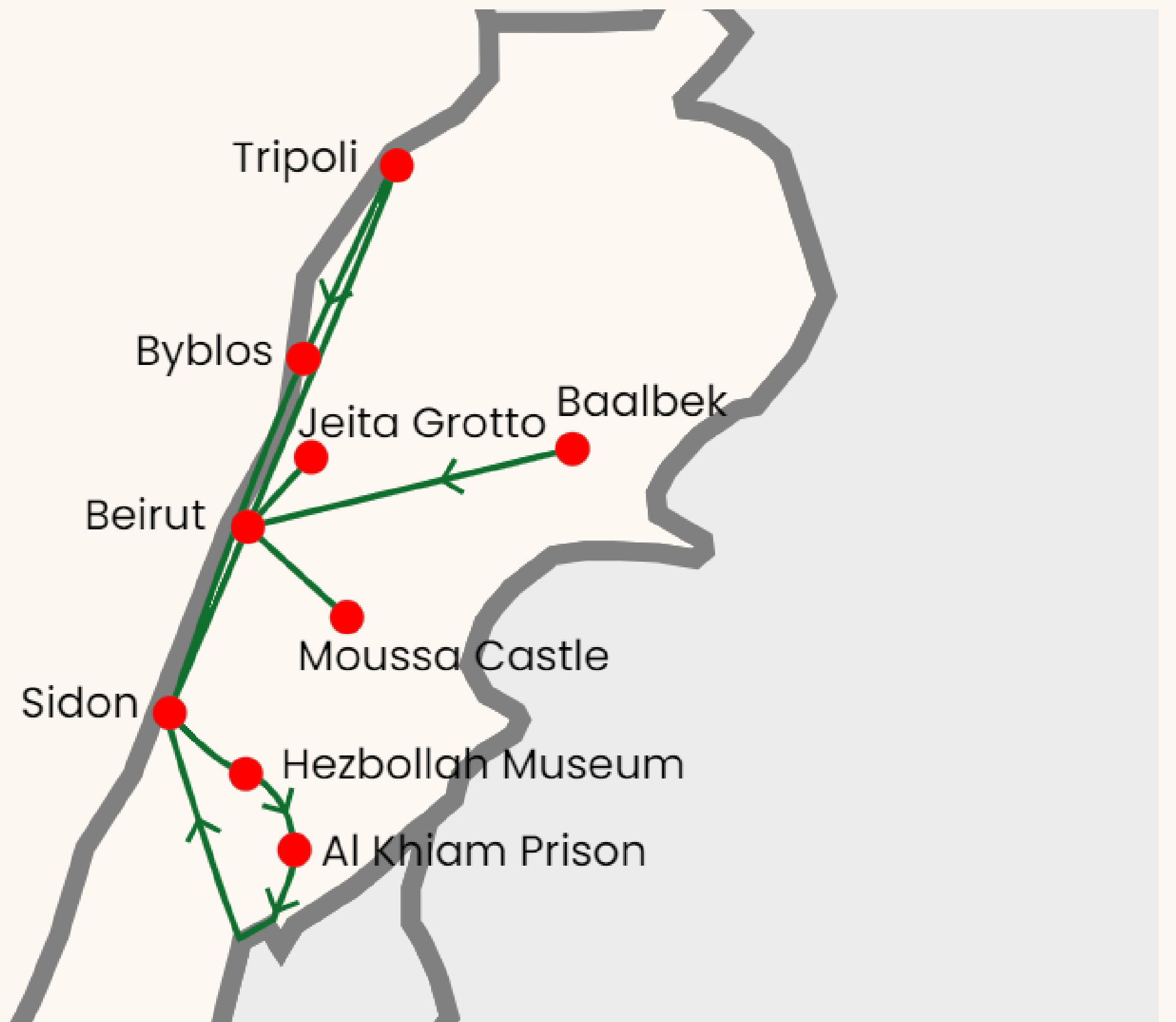
- Accommodation in twin share at roughly 3 star hotels/guesthouses, breakfast included
- Transport, beginning and ending in Beirut
- Entrance fees to all sites mentioned in the itinerary
- SAIGA guide and local guides

EXCLUSIONS:

- Meals other than breakfast
- Transport to and from Beirut
- Accommodation and any other services before or after the tour
- Personal expenses such as souvenirs or any optional activities

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Day 1	Tripoli - World Fair Site - Byblos
Day 2	Hezbollah Museum - Sidon
Day 3	Baalbek - Rayak Winery
Day 4	Jeita Grotto - Dictator Museum - Moussa Castle

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Itinerary:

Day 1: Fri 23rd September - Tripoli, World Fair Site, Byblos

- We will meet this morning at 9am to begin our exciting trip to some of Lebanon's more interesting and unusual sites.
- We'll start off with a drive up the north coast of Lebanon. Our first stop is the Tripoli International Fair Site. In 1963, the famous brutalist architect Oscar Niemeyer was commissioned to design a complex for a World Expo. Unfortunately, construction was interrupted by the Lebanese Civil War and the project remained unfinished and since then it has been left to decay. The fair grounds present us with an awesome opportunity to explore some amazing, abandoned brutalist architecture. We'll then head into the centre of Tripoli to take a walk around and get some lunch.
- On the way back south, we'll stop in at the famous ancient city of Byblos. Many believe Byblos is the oldest city in the entire world, with it first being inhabited between 8800 and 7000 BC! Over the course of its existence, Byblos has seen many of the world's empires come and go, including the Egyptian, Assyrian, Phoenician, Persian, Greek, Roman and Ottoman just to name a few.
- One last stop, this time at a microbrewery! "A microbrewery in Lebanon?" you're thinking... Opened in 2014, this local watering hole offers some unique drops made on site. Filled with young and hip Lebanese, we'll stop by to have a drink. For those who didn't get enough abandoned buildings in Tripoli, there is a never-finished aquarium right next door.

Day 2: Sat 24th Sept - Hezbollah Museum, Al Khiam Prison

- Today we'll head in the opposite direction and drive south, first to the port city of Sidon, another town which claims to be the oldest in the world. Here we'll stop to get permits to head to the south. This is the only way to get these permits, they don't issue them in advance, but it in itself is a pretty unique and interesting experience!
- We'll then head to the famous Hezbollah Resistance Museum. This open-air museum was built on one of the sites of battles they fought against Israeli soldiers. This theme park/propaganda museum is surprisingly tasteful and shows both the lives of soldiers as well as the politics behind the deadly confrontations.
- It is due to Hezbollah that Israeli forces retreated from this part of southern Lebanon in 2000, after 22 years of occupation.
- We'll then use our permits to travel to the Al Khiam Prison, which was notoriously used by the Israeli occupation and their Lebanese allies to detain and torture Lebanese resistance fighters. Here we'll see the methods used to torture and gain important information for the war. When the prison was liberated, the Lebanese allies of Israel who ran the prison fled to Israel. Parts of the prison were then bombed to hide the evidence.
- Finally we'll take a drive along the wall that the Israelis have built to cut off parts of Lebanon and the border areas under the watch of UN peacekeepers.
- After a very full day of site-seeing, we'll head back to Beirut with a stop in Sidon for dinner.

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Day 3: Sun 25th Sept – Baalbek, Rayak Winery

- Baalbek is one of those must-see sites, the most famous in all of Lebanon and considered one of the world's most important historical sites. During the Greek and Roman Empires, the city was known as Heliopolis. Baalbek dates back to possibly as early as 9000 BC, when it was an important place of worship. In 1984 it was made a UNESCO World Heritage site and you can see why with its magnificent towering monuments and impressive structures. Baalbek stopped being a city in 748 when it was partly destroyed and ransacked by Marwan II of the Umayyad Caliphate.
- We'll take the scenic route there, through the mountains east of Beirut, but on the way back we'll drive through the Beka Valley, stopping at our favourite winery on the way home.
- Rayak Winery is in the town of Rayak, and is a really magical experience. Family run, it is definitely a passion project, and you won't find their wines sold anywhere other than at their own cellar door. For \$5 per person we'll be given a "tasting" (though we can pour our own from the vats!), while the owner will proudly explain in as much detail as you like about all the processes involved. Then to top it off, we'll be given an arak display. And this is no joke - this is genuinely some of the best wine you'll ever have tasted.
- We'll stop for dinner on the way through the Beka Valley and return to Beirut in the evening.

Day 4: Mon 26th Sept – Jeita Grotto, Dictator Museum, Moussa Castle

- Another one of the must-see sites in Lebanon is the Jeita Grotto. The grotto is the longest cave in the Middle East at over 9km long and is only a short drive from Beirut. There are actually two caves, but they are linked by smaller passages. One of the highlights is the impressive collection of stalactites and stalagmites, as well as the underground river.
- It is believed the caves were infact inhabited during prehistoric times but then weren't discovered until 1836 by an American missionary.
- The area itself has been appropriately kept natural with souvenir shops, train rides, ropeways, a small zoo, a sculpture park and all the other gimmicks you'd expect.
- After the grotto you're in for a real treat! The Hall of Fame Museum, the world's first animated silicon museum. Some of your favourite world leaders are here and prime for a photo opportunity. American Presidents such as Bill Clinton and George Bush, dictators such as Saddam Hussein and Honsi Mubarak as well as other eminent individuals such as Einstein, Pope John Paul II and Arafat. There's also a lot of Lebanese political leaders as well.
- Heading to the southern side of Beirut again we'll drive into the mountains to one of the stranger sites in Lebanon, the Moussa Castle.
- As a young man Moussa Al Maamari had a hard life, ridiculed by teachers and shunned by the girl he wanted to be with. Instead of despair he bought himself some land and made it his life-long ambition to build his own castle. Doing part time work elsewhere to fund his dream, he not only built a large castle but filled it with an eclectic collection of guns, jewellery and wax figures

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