

POLITICALTOURS

Travel beyond the headlines

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Lebanon

Dates:

March 2020, Saturday 28th to Sunday 5th April 8 nights

Glamorous and challenging, scarred by war and yet remarkably stable; Lebanon defies all expectations. This tour delves into the country's recent past, explores the impact of the conflict in Syria and looks at the balance of power between its diverse religious groups. We meet with some of Lebanon's best-known political leaders from Nabih Berri to Walid Jumblatt and visit the wonderful Roman ruins at Baalbek.

Our journey starts in Beirut and then winds its way down the Mediterranean coast to Tyre in the south. After visits to forts both ancient (Crusaders) and modern (Hezbollah) we view the border with Israel and then head north through the Bekaa valley and its vineyards. From Baalbek we return to Beirut for talks with some of the country's leading figures.

The tour includes meetings with a wide range of communities including the Palestinians, Syrian refugees, and the main key Lebanese religious groups; Christians, Shia, Sunni and the Druze.

The tour is lead by **Nicholas Blanford**, one of the foremost commentators in the region and a frequent writer on Hezbollah. We first ran this tour in 2016 to rave reviews.

Price: £4500.00

Single Supplement: £500.00

Most meals and all accommodation are included in the price. Flights are not included and need to be arranged with your own travel agent. If you would like to join this tour please contact us at info@politicaltours.com or call +44 834 289 2349

Like all our tours the itinerary is focused on current affairs. Events on the ground may change and the final schedule may be adjusted accordingly.

Itinerary

Day One: *Arrival in Beirut*

Dinner with Political Tours team and Nicholas Blanford and Leena Saidi.

Day Two: *Beirut*

Tour of central Beirut. From the civil war to the huge development boom of the 2000s we take a look at how the capital has changed. Walking tour of the Green Line with two former fighters from the civil war. Meet with an architect and local activist. We head downtown for an introduction to the city centre and government buildings. We visit Buri Hammoud, the Armenian Neighbourhood. Meeting with a member of the municipal council; and a local Armenian family that has lived in the city throughout this time. Armenians are hosting many families from Syria. Later we meet with the Director of the Asfari Institute at the American University; and author of "Refugees and Lebanon from 1948 to the present." *Overnight in Beirut*

Days Three: *Tyre*

We stop en route at Mleeta, a former Hezbollah base and now tourist centre. We visit the Beaufort castle en route which has spectacular views of the border area before entering Tyre, where we meet with a dynamic local film director who runs a NGO working with separate religious communities. Dinner in the port at Tyre. *Overnight in Tyre*

Day Four: *to Chtaura*

Tyre is a Hezbollah controlled municipality. Meeting with the mayor of Tyre, who outlines the main challenges facing the city. We head to the southern border with Nicholas Blanford. We visit the Blue Line – the redrawn border after Israeli withdrawal in 2000. We view all three borders (Israel, Lebanon and Syria) as well as Mount Herman. Later we head north towards Baalbek and visit a vineyard in the Bekaa valley. Lebanon's wine trade is a major success story; visit Chateau Khoury. *Overnight in Chtaura*

Day Five: *Baalbek*

Meeting with the mayor of Baalbek. The impact of the war in Syria and the extent of the refugee crisis is by far the most pressing issue in Lebanese politics. There are major Syrian refugee camps here. We meet with a local NGO supporting Syrian refugees. There are an estimated 100,000 in the municipality. Visit to Roman ruins and the Palmyra hotel (in the footsteps of Charles de Gaulle, Jean Cocteau and the Shah). Meeting with a Syrian family and return to hotel for dinner and discussion with Nick Blanford. *Overnight in Chtaura*

Day Six: *Beirut*

The Palestinian refugee camps played a significant role in Lebanon's civil war and are a reminder of the long term legacy of receiving high numbers of refugees. Are there lessons to be learned here? We visit the Chatilla refugee camps (situation permitting) with a local NGO. We then head downtown to the American University in Beirut. Meeting with the vice-president of the Central Bank, as well as one of Lebanon's best-known journalists and an academic. Visit to the Daily Star and meeting with the editor-in-chief. *Overnight in Beirut*

Day Seven & Eight: *Beirut*

Meetings with senior Lebanese politicians, diplomats and analysts. These meetings are subject to confirmation nearer the time. Friday morning; we head to Sfeir in the southern suburbs for a meeting with Hezbollah's Charge D'Affaire International Relations. Walk along the Corniche and meet with NGO fighting against appropriation of Beirut Coast. The same groups are also involved in the rubbish protests. Further meetings will be confirmed closer to departure. *Overnight in Beirut*

Day Nine: *Beirut*

Tour ends after breakfast