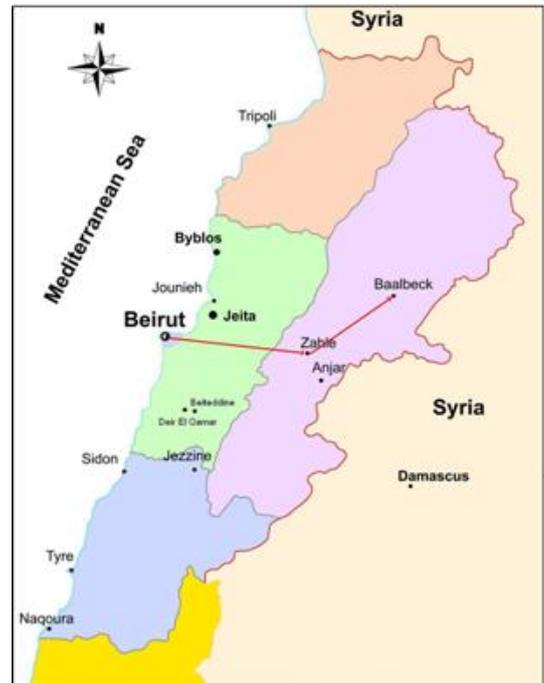


## Excursion: Baalbeck, Ksara & Beirut

Dep	Arr	Duration	Details
08.00	10.00	120 min	Depart from Beirut to Baalbeck
10.00	12.00	120 min	Visit the Roman temples and quarry
12.00	13.00	60 min	Drive back to Zahle
13.00	13.45	45 min	Visit Ksara Winery with wine tasting
13.45	14.00	15 min	Drive to Chtaura for lunch
14.00	15.30	90 min	Lunch at Massabki Hotel
15.30	16.30	60 min	Drive back to Beirut
16.30	17.30	60 min	Beirut city center on foot
17.30	17.45	15 min	Drive back to the Hotel
	17.15		Arrival at the Hotel

**Duration of excursion: 9 hrs 15 min**



### **Description of excursion:**

From Beirut, climb Eastward passing Dahr El Baidar and Chtaura. A magnificent view of the fertile Bekaa valley stretches ahead, then to the North-East until we reach the city of Baalbeck. Visit the largest and the greatest, ever built, well preserved Roman temples of Bacchus & Jupiter. See, also, one of the biggest stones ever quarried for building purposes. Drive back to Zahle for visiting Ksara Winery and its underground caves dating back to the Roman period besides to taste and discover one of the best undiscovered wines. Proceed to Chtaura for lunch. Lunch will be served in one of the most well known hotels in Chtaura "Massabki Hotel", discover the real taste of the famous traditional Lebanese Mezza with soft drinks. Drive back to Beirut for visiting the city center. Walk in the heart of the renovated ancient city. Return to the hotel.

### **Description of sites:**

#### **Beirut**

Beirut was built on a rocky promontory, a sight also occupied by prehistoric man. In ancient times it was overshadowed by more powerful neighbors, but when the city-states of Sidon and Tyre began to decline in the first millennium BC, Berytus, as it was called then, acquired more influence, but it was not until Roman times that it became an important port and cultural center.

After the Roman power waned, Greek influence dominated in the Byzantine period, beginning in the 4th century AD. Later, the Crusaders held the city for some 200 years. It was only at the end of the 19th century, after 400 years of Ottoman rule that Beirut began to develop and modernize.

Modern Beirut, which has well over 1 million citizens, remains the cultural and commercial center of the country. Since the early 1990's, Beirut's city center is being redeveloped into a modern city that will also retain its familiar Oriental flavor.



### **Baalbeck**

The Roman temples of Baalbeck, in the Bekaa valley 85 kilometers from Beirut, make up the largest and best-preserved corpus of Roman architecture. The Acropolis occupies the top of an artificial hill built up of different layers of habitation.

Its temples, dedicated to Jupiter, Bacchus and Venus, were constructed between the first and third centuries AD.

In the large temple known as "Jupiter temple" six of the fifty four giant columns that originally surrounded the sanctuary survive today. The temple has an impressive podium and a vast rectangular courtyard where sacrifices were carried out. The sanctuary is reached through a propylaea (monumental entrance) and hexagonal forecourt.

The town of Baalbeck has major remains from Islamic times including the grand mosque, built by the Umayyad with material borrowed from ancient monuments, and another mosque built in Mamluke times near the spring of Ras El-Ain.

### **Ksara Winery**

Château Ksara is Lebanon's oldest winery, founded in 1857 by French Jesuit priests. It is also a household name in the Lebanon thanks to being the biggest producer (close to three million bottles annually) and a prominent presence in every shop, restaurant and café for its wines. Discovered in Ksara underground tunnels around two kilometers of original Roman caves beneath the winery and vineyards, where the temperature (13 °C), all the year through, is ideal for storing wine in special wooden barrels imported from France . Ksara farms 348 hectares of vineyard in the Bekaa Valley, without the use of chemical herbicides.