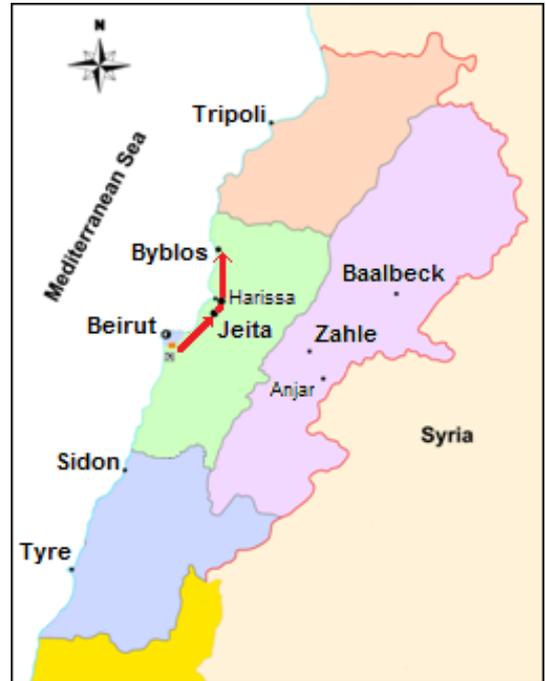


Excursion: Byblos, Harissa & Jeita Grotto

Dep	Arr	Duration	Details
08.30	09.30	60 min.	Depart from Beirut to Byblos
09.30	09.45	15 min.	Visit the cathedral of St John-Marcus
09.45	10.45	60 min.	Visit the castle and the ruins of Byblos
10.45	11.15	30 min.	Free time at old Byblos Souk (Market)
11.15	11.30	15 min.	Visit the old harbor of Byblos
11.30	12.15	45 min.	Drive to Harissa
12.15	12.45	45 min.	Visit Harissa
12.45	13.15	30 min.	Drive to Jeita Grotto
13.15	14.45	90 min.	Lunch in Jeita Restaurant
14.45	16.15	90 min.	Visit Jeita Grotto: upper & lower cave
16.15	17.00	45 min.	Drive back to the hotel
	17.00		Arrival at the hotel

Duration of excursion: 8 hrs 30 min



Description of excursion:

From Beirut, drive via the North coastal road to Byblos one of the oldest cities in the world, going back at least 7,000 years. The tour starts with a visit of St. John-Marcus cathedral, then the Crusader's castle with Phoenician, Roman and Byzantine ruins, free time in the old Souk and then visit the old Harbor. Drive back to Harissa for visiting the famous shrine of the Holly Virgin Mary "Our Lady of Lebanon" and enjoy a wonderful view over the bay of Jounieh. Proceed to Jeita for lunch then visit the spectacular grottos in Jeita; a short ride by cable car leads to the upper grotto, which can be visited on foot, a cathedral of stalagmites and stalactites which took millions of years to develop. The lower cave can be visited by a small boat. Return back to the hotel.

Description of sites:

Jeita

About 20 km North of Beirut is one of the world's most beautiful caverns, abundant with powerful elements of nature. Lebanon. You get to the cave mouth by telecabine. It is like walking into a huge Cathedral, with the view of a crystallized castle made by slow-flowing drops of water during millions of years. Stalactites descend from the ceiling and huge columns of stalagmites pushing upwards. It is all sensitively lit, but unfortunately no photography is allowed. The lower chamber is also beautiful to visit by a small boat, if the level of water permits, however, the upper vast chamber won't make you feel missing anything.



Harissa

Harissa, overlooking the magnificent bay of Jounieh, is the place of worship to many Christians; with an important and famous statue of “Our Lady of Lebanon” devoted to Mary, Madonna of Lebanon. The statue stands on a cone of masonry around which winds a spiral staircase leading to the top. The bronze statue was made in France and brought to Lebanon early 20th century. Inside the cone of masonry is a small chapel built in 1908.

Other places of worship are the convent of St. Paul a Greek Catholic Melkite and the Basilica of Harissa, situated behind the statue which was built during the 1970s. Designed in the style of a Cedar tree and a Phoenician ship. The Basilica is vast and huge to seat about 2,500 worshipers.

Harissa lies at an altitude of 600m, about 25km north from Beirut.

Byblos

Byblos is located only 36 kilometers north of Beirut and is one of the oldest cities in the world, going back at least 7,000 years. The rise and fall of nearly two dozen successive levels of human culture make Byblos one of the richest archaeological sights in the Middle East. Millennium ago, Byblos was the commercial and religious capital of the Phoenician coast. Byblos also gave its name to the Bible and it was there that the first linear alphabet, the forerunner of the alphabet we use today, was invented. The Crusaders-Medieval port has been restored and the nearby excavations of the city’s past stretch from Stone Age to the Crusader era. The old part of town, with its cafés and restaurants adds to the attraction of this ancient city and make Byblos a popular destination. Before Byblos was excavated, the ruins of successive cities had formed a mound about 12 meters high, covered with houses and gardens. Excavations revealed a wealth of history, including the remnants of an ancient city dating back to the third millennium BC, foundations of a temple erected in 2,700 BC, a Temple of the Obelisks, enclosures and houses from pre-urban times, etc. etc.

The sight also contains a Roman theatre; nine underground Royal Tombs of the Byblos Kings, a Roman colonnade and a Crusader’s castle.