

BEIRUT UPDATE 2018

CATEGORIES: Quick Guide

Get Directions: Beirut, Lebanon

A few days ago I noticed that two of the food bloggers I follow on Instagram, [@felicityspector](#) and [@lostincheeseland](#) were in Beirut on a famtrip called #TasteLebanon. I guess the Lebanese are betting on a revived summer season full of tourists. There is even a brand new [Monocle Guide Beirut](#), so this may be the time you finally book your trip to the country. By the way, there is an [amazing walking tour led by Beiruti Ronnie Chatah](#). I would definitely book it in advance. Many of the places they visited are already on the [Quick Guide Best of Beirut](#) I published after coming back from the city late in 2016 and here are a few new places where I followed them:

ICHKHANIAN BAKERY

If you can't make it to us, we can bring our wonderful food to your doorstep! #WeCater #WeDeliver #WeBake #IchkhanianBakery #ArmenianFood #CateringServices Armenian #Yummy #Homemade #Food #tasteandflavors #yumynation #beirutfoodporn #beirutfood #zomatolb #lebanon #mondanite #reemmember #beiruting #meetlebanon #beiritfoodporn #lebanonspotlights #thatswhatsup #mediterranean #deliciouslebanon #hungrylebanese #livelovelebanon #livelovearmenia #whatsforbreakfast #lebanesetimes

A post shared by [_Ichkhanian](#) (@ichkhanian.bakery) on May 9, 2018 at 5:23am PDT

SEZA BISTRO ARMENIEN

Seza Armenian bistro in Mar Mikhael, Beirut. #latergram #sezabistro #tiles #tilework #tiledfloors #chandelier #marmikhael #beirut #beyrouth #lebanon #liban #igerslebanon #igersbeirut #ig_beirut #ig_lebanon #instagram_beirut #igBeirut #livelovebeirut #livelovelebanon #travel #travelgram #mytravelgram #dametraveler #sheisnotlost #wearetravelgirls #solotravel #solotraveler

A post shared by [Milila Lorraine Khoury](#) (@milialorraine) on Aug 11, 2017 at 7:05am PDT

MITRI HANNA MOUSSA ICE CREAM

[Read about it here in this Munchies post](#)

When its pushing 33 Celsius, it doesn't get much better than this apricot sorbet and pistachio ice cream, from Hanna Mitri, who make their acclaimed ices by hand inside a tiny kitchen next to an even tinier store... there is a constant queue of customers – and even the wafer biscuit is specially made to a traditional recipe. Plus you can have as many flavours as you like. I'm not usually an ice cream fan but when it's this good... so irresistible! That swirl of apricot, studded with kernels, absolutely sang of summer. ???????

A post shared by [Felicity Spector](#) (@felicityspector) on May 5, 2018 at 12:55pm PDT

SEPT WINERY BIODYNAMIC WINES

Spring is officially launched at Sept Winery and what a weekend it was! Our table received its first guests of the season and we can't wait to see more of your lovely faces in our garden and share incredible wine moments with you! Thanks for everyone who made this weekend unforgettable! ?? #septwinery #batroun #lebanon

#lebanesewines #lebanesewinemaker #wine #winelovers #winestagram #winemoments #foodandwine #foodporn #nature #naturegram #landscape #mountains #tablesetting #weekendescape #travellebanon #lebanontourism #ruraltourism #instalebanon #livelovelebanon #photooftheday #instagood #ig_lebanon #biodynamicwine #naturalagriculture

A post shared by [Sept Winery](#) (@septwinery) on Mar 4, 2018 at 7:04am PST

BKERZAY GUEST HOUSE & RESTAURANT IN CHOUF, NEAR BEIRUT

When you wake up in Bkerzay, the dreams continue #bkerzay #lebanesearchitecture #lebanon #lebanese #liban #libanais #libano #libanes #beirut #beyrouth #chouf #shouf #livelovebeirut #livelovelebanon

A post shared by [Bkerzay](#) (@bkerzay) on Feb 22, 2018 at 3:03am PST

AL JAMMAL RESTAURANT IN BATROUN, NORTH LEBANON

A new definition of outdoor dining ? Feet in the water, wild catches of the day and local rosé ?? . #lostncheeselandtravels #batroun #lebanon #liban #mediterranean #mediterraneandiet #traveldeeper #iamatraveler #beachyvibes #onthebeach #lebanontraveler

A post shared by [Lindsey Tramuta](#) (@lostncheeseland) on May 4, 2018 at 5:13am PDT

BEST OF BEIRUT

CATEGORIES: Quick Guide

Get Directions: Beirut, Lebanon

I was in Beirut, Lebanon, last November 2016. The city is booming and there is just plenty of fabulous restaurants, hotels, shops, cafés and bars. I was there for a week and it was not enough to see and do all I had in mind. Bear in mind that you can pay everything everywhere in US dollars, so no need to change money at all. You will be given change in Lebanese pounds here and there. The rate is 1.500 pounds for each dollar. Most checks in bars and restaurants come in both US dollars and Leb pounds so you do not even have to waste time converting. If you pay by credit card you can choose which currency to use.

From the airport into the city expect to pay around 15 to 20 US dollars. Bargain your ride before boarding. You will be swarmed by drivers at the arrivals hall. To go from one place of the city to another, 5.000 pounds is tops for any ride. It makes it easier to use Uber not to have to haggle prices or feel overcharged. You will be billed in US dollars.

Key areas of the city are Hamra, Downtown, Achrafiye and Mar Mikhael. The hippest ones being Achrafiye and Mar Mikhael (try getting a room at either one of the other) with trendsetters opening up shops and cafés in Quarantine (close to the beach) and Badaro (up in the Northern Hills).

It is a very safe place. Worst nuisance is traffic. Like every other world city, anything can happen there, but I felt safer in Beirut than in London, Rio or Paris (take the RER from Charles de Gaulle airport in the evening to see what is to be scared).

There are Airbnb and plenty of swish hotels. The [Hôte Libanais](#) has a few cute boutique guest houses on a bed&breakfast scheme. For hotels, you can try [O Monot](#) (design) or [Albergo](#) (luxury) in Achrafiye, [Villa Clara](#) in Mar Mikhael or the plenty of [Intercontis](#), [Four Seasons](#) and the likes. I once stayed at the [Radisson Blu Martinez](#) in Clemenceau and also at the [Warwick Palm Beach](#), nearby. The [Le Gray](#) is one of the best but in my opinion a bit overrated.

When it comes to food, you are really spoiled for choice in a culture whose favorite pastime is eating. The best Lebanese restaurant by far is [Liza Beirut](#), in Achrafiye. The food is delicate and presented as works of art. Moreover, the restaurant is gorgeous. I would go there for dinner or brunch if you happen to be in town on a Sunday. Another place that is a must, this time for lunch is [Tawlet](#), in Mar Mikhael.

Each day of the week a lady from one region of Lebanon comes to town to cook her specialties. You pay a fixed price and eat as much as you can from the open buffet. Make sure you save space for dessert. However, the two trendiest places to eat now are [Meat the Fish](#), at Saifi Art Village in Downtown and [Baron Beirut](#), in Mar Mikhael. I would definitely book a table for dinner at Baron as the food is to die for!

A nice walk where you will see plenty of options to eat, and shops, and cafés, and amazing old houses falling apart is from Gouraud Street into Armenia Street. That is a must go area in the evenings and everyone who is under 30 or enjoys drinking and meeting friends head to every day of the week. It is hard to recommend one or two places as you will be overwhelmed by choice. Make sure you walk the side streets too, like Rue Madrid and Rue Alexander Flemming.

There is a café called [Kalei Coffee Company](#) that, if you are into coffee, you must go. It is not far from Armenia Street, just follow the way on Google Maps. Jade has a small store adjacent to the place where she sells locally distilled gin and the magazine [The Carton](#). [Papercup Bookstore and Coffee Shop](#) also has good coffee and a wide selection of books and periodicals from all over the world.

If you both have the energy for a night out, go for a drink at one of the most gay-friendly bars in Clemenceau, [Bardo](#). Afterward, walk to [Salon Beirut](#) for some live jazz before heading to [BO18 Nightclub](#) (weekends). If you prefer something more cultural, there are excellent stand-up comedy shows and musicals at [Metro al-Madina](#) (in Arabic though but still fun). A place that a lot of people told me to go to for shisha is [Al Falamanki](#). I went there during the day and was not over impressed. However, at 2 am the place seems to be livelier.

For shopping, I would have a look at [Orient 499](#) for beautiful kaftans and homeware. For local independent artists, [Plan Bey](#) sells posters and books. [Beirut Souks](#) is a shopping mall not worth wasting your precious time. The Downtown area was beautiful before Lebanon descended once more in political instability. Many shops and cafés closed down and the area is a ghost town with a few government buildings protected by the army. The Mohammed al-Amin Mosque, with the blue dome, is worth a visit though as well as the Beirut Municipality Building.

OUT OF TOWN

Will you guys have time to get out of the city? One suggestion for a nice day is to drive for around an hour north via the coastal highway to a lovely winery called [Ixsir](#). You can have lunch there. On the way, you can stop by [Aishti Foundation](#) to see one of the world's coolest luxury department stores with Lebanon's largest private art collection.

Biblos is also on the way, a charming historic village by the sea. There is a church designed by Oscar Niemeyer up in Harissa for the Virgin Mary of Lebanon. The view from up there is incredible. You can arrange with a taxi driver to take you around all of these places for the day. I rented a car, but I have ample experience in driving in dangerous places. Not recommended.

Another option, much further, is Baalbek, in the Bekaa Valley, where there are those famous Roman ruins and a few vineyards like [Château Ksara](#), in Zahle. It is quite a long drive because of all the checkpoints on the way and the Lebanese roundabouts where cars come from all sides, and nobody gives way to anybody. Not fun.

Well, have fun and send me your tips once you get back to New York.

Yours,

TravelVince

ps: I forgot to mention the newly refurbished [Sursock Museum](#), an old Levantine palace with a contemporary Lebanese art

collection, a café, and a nice souvenir shop.
