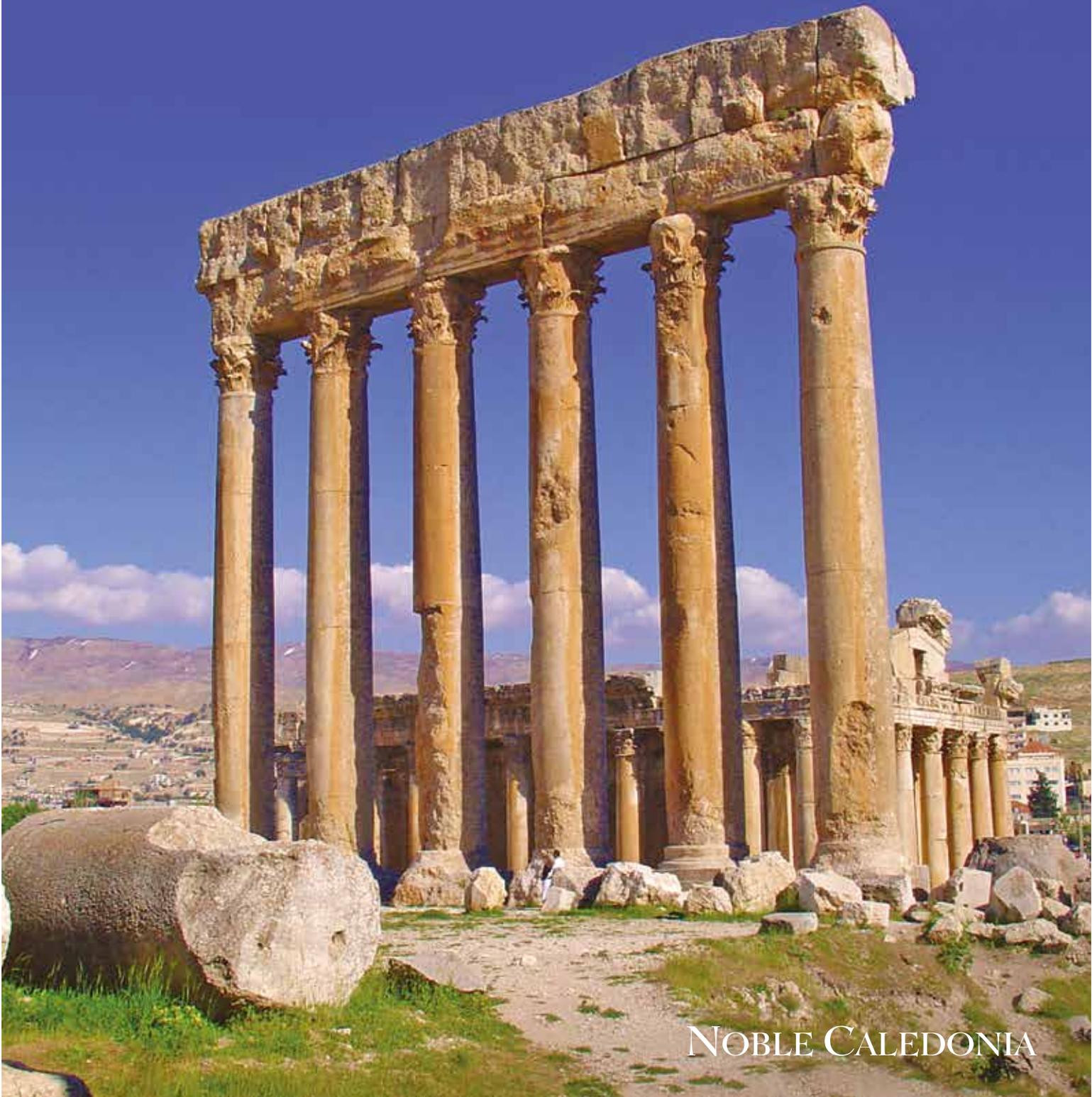


LEBANON

CROSSROADS OF CULTURES

An escorted tour of the historical & cultural wonders of Lebanon
staying at Le Gray, Beirut

24th September to 2nd October 2020
& 15th to 23rd April 2021



NOBLE CALEDONIA



Ruins of Umayyad Palace, Anjar



The Crusader Sea Castle at Sidon



The Old Harbour and ancient Phoenician fishing port of Byblos

Lebanon's location at the crossroads of the Mediterranean and Arabia has shaped the country's rich history and cultural identity and from impressive Roman ruins to Medieval Crusader castles and remnants of the country's Phoenician, Persian, Arab and French-colonial past, there is much to explore. True, it is a country with a turbulent past but those prepared to look beyond the headlines will discover a truly captivating land with incredible historical and archaeological sites, stunning scenery and welcoming and hospitable people.

We will be based in the cosmopolitan capital of Beirut which, with many parts of the city having been reconstructed since the Civil War, is slowly reclaiming its title of 'Paris of the Middle East'. From here we will journey through mountainous landscapes covered in majestic cedar trees in the Chouf Mountains, wander through the stunning cave system at Jeita Grotto and discover the ancient settlements of Byblos and Batroun on the shimmering Mediterranean coast. In the north of the country we head to the hills of the Qadisha Valley with its rock-cut monasteries, wildflowers and isolated villages and in the south we will visit Sidon with its atmospheric souks and the magnificent ruins at Tyre. A memorable experience for many will be standing in front of the magnificent Roman temples of Baalbek, the most impressive site in Lebanon and arguably the best-preserved ruins in the Middle East. The highlights of our tour are endless and we hope you can join us on what promises to be a unique journey through a fascinating yet underappreciated country.



The Itinerary

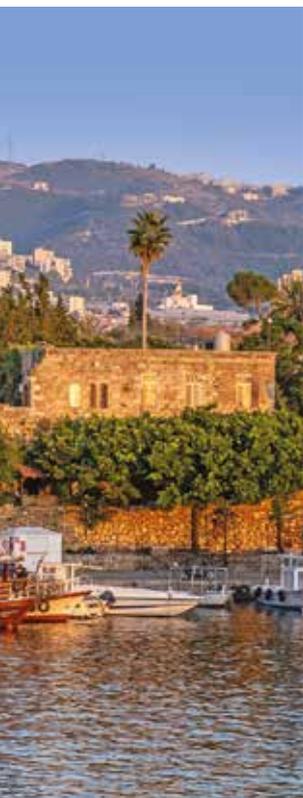
Day 1 London to Beirut, Lebanon. Fly by scheduled flight. Arrive late this evening and transfer to Le Gray Hotel for our eight night stay.

Day 2 Beirut & the Chouf. After breakfast at the hotel we journey south from Beirut, hugging the Mediterranean coast with its numerous beach resorts before heading inland and starting the climb into the beautiful Chouf Mountains. Just an hour outside the capital, the region has a rich geographical, cultural and ethnic identity that sets it apart from the rest of the country. We visit the UNESCO World Heritage Site at Deir el Qamar and explore the Ottoman-era town on foot. Continue to Beiteddine, the 'house of

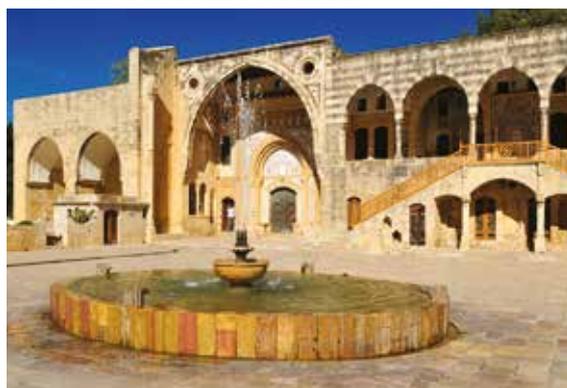
faith'. This glorious palace occupies a rocky spur overlooking a valley and is a superb example of early 19th century Lebanese architecture. The palace was created as the home for Emir Bechir Chehab II who lived here until he was forced into exile in 1840. For several decades it was used by the Ottomans as the government residence, then in 1934 it was declared a historic monument and has since been used as the president's summer house. After lunch at a local restaurant we return to Beirut and visit the National Museum this afternoon. Dinner will be served at the hotel this evening. (B, L, D)

Day 3 Jeita, Harissa & Byblos. This morning we visit one of Lebanon's greatest natural wonders, the stunning Jeita Grotto cave system in the

Nahr al-Kalb valley, 11 miles to the north east of Beirut. Take a short boat trip to discover the Lower Cave before visiting the Upper Cave, home to one of the largest hanging stalactites in the world. We continue on to nearby Harissa where we take a cable car up to the Shrine of Our Lady of Lebanon, which offers wonderful views over the Bay of Jounieh. After a local lunch we visit Byblos, said to be one of the oldest continuously inhabited settlements in the world. Once a Crusader stronghold, the ancient port is today a charming town of pretty flower-decked houses and stepped lanes encircled by Medieval walls and topped by a Crusader castle. Explore the ramparts and admire the views across the circular harbour before visiting the 12th century Church of St



Wine stored in the Roman caves at Chateau Ksara



Beiteddine Palace of Emir Bashir



Cedars of God Nature Reserve

John the Baptist with its modern bell tower, the lively harbour and bustling souks. (B, L)

Day 4 Rachana, Balamand & Batroun. As we leave the city behind this morning, the winding country road to Rachana is marked by large sculptures that have become part of the landscape alongside almond and olive trees – organic forms made from stone, wood and metal. Set in the Batroun region, the village of Rachana is an open-air art museum for the work of the Basbous brothers, a family of prolific sculptors. Continue north to Balamand where we visit the Orthodox Monastery, positioned majestically in the hills affording a breathtaking view of the Mediterranean. After a stop for lunch we will visit Batroun, a treasure trove of Phoenician, Roman and Byzantine history that is probably best-known today for its beaches. Its existence can be traced all the way back to pre-historic times, with early tools retrieved within caves along the Nahr el Jaouz river. Today's town is a delight to explore and a quieter alternative to the hustle and bustle of Beirut. We also pass by Mseilha Fort, a Medieval fort built by Emir Fakhreddine to guard the route from Tripoli to Beirut. (B, L)

Day 5 The Cedars of Lebanon & Qadisha Valley. This morning we return to the scenic north of the country as we head up into the hills and the celebrated Valley of Qozhaya, home to the Monastery of Saint Anthony, situated at a height of 3000 feet above sea level and surrounded by pine and oak-clad hills. Visit the monastery and its famous cave before ascending further to the Cedars of God Nature Reserve. The ancient cedar forest once spanned the entire area and its timber was favoured by the Egyptians, Romans, and Persians, to name a few. Sadly, exploitation has led to mass deforestation and this forest is now rigorously protected as a World Heritage Site. Take a walk among the imposing trees, some with trunks spanning more than thirty feet across.

This afternoon visit the Mar Lichaa Monastery, savouring some spectacular views as we travel through the beautiful Qadisha Valley. (B, L)

Day 6 Baalbeck, Ksara & Anjar. Travel to Baalbeck - one of the wonders of the ancient world and Lebanon's greatest Roman treasure. Dating back 4000 years, Baalbeck's remarkable ruins are an astounding testimony to the wealth and power of Imperial Rome and the well-preserved site is famed for its amazing temples and monumental scale. Baalbeck's main attractions are the magnificent Jupiter Temple and Temple of Bacchus. The remaining six Corinthian columns are a potent reminder of the former grandeur of the Jupiter Temple while the imposing Temple of Bacchus is remarkably intact apart from its roof. We continue to Chateau Ksara, which has been producing Lebanese wine since 1857, and tour the historic two-kilometre Roman caves. The constant temperature is well-suited for storage of the rarest and finest vintages and we will enjoy a tasting here of some of the estates' wines. After lunch we visit the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Anjar, established during the Umayyad period by Caliph Walid Bin Abed Al Malak at the beginning of the 8th century. The ruins we see today were only discovered by archaeologists at the end of the 1940s, and their excavations revealed a rectangular fortified city which is surrounded by walls and guarded by forty towers. (B, L)

Day 7 Sidon, Tyre & Echmoun. After breakfast at the hotel, head south to Sidon, the largest city in the south of the country. Known locally as Saida, the city's northern harbour is graced by the iconic sea castle, erected in the early 13th century by the knights of St John. We will also see the old souks and the 17th century Khan el Franj, a marketplace built to accommodate French merchants and goods in order to develop trade with Europe. After lunch head further south to Tyre, one of the oldest continually

inhabited cities in the world, where we visit its two UNESCO sites, the al-Mina and al-Bass archaeological parks. We will see the aqueduct, a second-century triumphal arch, the hippodrome and impressive necropolis. Return to Beirut via the temple complex of Echmoun, originally constructed in Phoenician times but added to in the Roman and Byzantine periods. (B, L)

Day 8 Beirut. Enjoy a day at leisure to further explore this most fascinating of cities. Meet this evening for a farewell dinner at the hotel. (B, D)

Day 9 Beirut to London. After an early breakfast in the hotel transfer to the airport for our scheduled flight to London. (B)

PRICES PER PERSON

Based on double occupancy

Category	
Deluxe Room	£3295
Premium Room	£3395
Deluxe Room for sole use	£3995
Premium Room for sole use	£4195

PRICE INCLUDES: Economy class scheduled air travel • Eight nights hotel accommodation in Beirut • Meals as shown (B – Breakfast, L – Lunch, D – Dinner) • Wine, beer & soft drinks with included meals (note wine and beer will only be offered where available) • Excursions • English speaking local guide • Tour Manager • Gratuities • Transfers.

Not Included: Travel insurance, meals other than those shown.

Group Size: We are restricting the group size to just 25 participants.

Important Information: Please note that if your passport contains an Israeli stamp you may be refused entry into Lebanon.



Deluxe Room



Premium Room



Foyer



Indigo on the Roof Restaurant



Gordon's Cafe



Rooftop Pool and Pool Lounge



Lobby Lounge

LE GRAY, BEIRUT

For the duration of our stay we will be based at Le Gray, Beirut, one of the city's most iconic luxury hotels and a member of The Leading Hotels of the World. Nestled in the heart of downtown Beirut, the hotel overlooks Martyrs' Square and is within walking distance of the city's shoreline, the renowned restaurants of the Gemmayzeh district and the shopping district. From 1975 to 1990 the area was razed by civil war but the restored neighbourhood (known as Solidere) is now the energetic soul of the city's new identity. This contemporary hotel features 103 sleek and modern rooms, a luxurious spa and a rooftop pool and terrace with marvellous 360 degree views over Beirut's fascinating skyline.

Your Accommodation

Le Gray, Beirut has some of the most spacious bedrooms and suites in the city. Designed with comfort and relaxation in mind, the rooms feature neutral décor with colour palettes in pastel shades of dusty blue, sage green and lilac. All rooms and suites are air-conditioned and feature spacious bathrooms with REN toiletries, hairdryer and bathrobes, LCD TV, complimentary Wi-Fi, work desk, tea and coffee making facilities, minibar and daily fresh fruit.

Rooms

Deluxe Rooms: Measuring 40 square metres, the Deluxe Rooms are spacious and can be configured as either a king size double or twin. The floor to ceiling windows offer views of either the historical downtown or Weygand Street.

Premium Rooms: The Premium Rooms offer a generous 50 square metres of space and feature a super king bed as well as a balcony with views of the historic downtown.

Your Space

The hotel's public areas include three lounges offering nibbles and drinks throughout the day: The Pool Lounge rooftop bar and terrace with its spectacular panoramic views; the opulent Cigar Lounge; and the Lobby Lounge which offers a relaxing space by day or night. The hotel also boasts an outdoor heated infinity pool, a well-appointed spa, a small gym and an array of restaurants and bars. On the ground floor, chic Gordon's Café offers casual all-day brasserie style dining and Indigo on the Roof serves breakfast, lunch and dinner in the sunlit dining room or outdoor terrace.

NOBLE CALEDONIA

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Our current booking conditions apply to all reservations and are available on request.

Cover image: The Temples of Jupiter and Bacchus in Baalbek