

Religious tours across Lebanon from the Hotel Albergo Relais & Châteaux

Lebanon is the ancient land that has been the heart of growth of the world's two major religions, Christianity and Islam. It is the country where places of worship abound by excellence and congregations find peace, serenity and meditation in the basilicas, cathedrals, churches, chapels, shrines, convents, monasteries, mosques and even caves where once hermits took shelter.

For many centuries, diverse religious traditions have shared this land, creating a rich mosaic of sacred beliefs and a unique multicultural society.

From north to south, passing through the coastal roads and the Bekaa, major Christian and Muslim worship places are scattered.

Whatever your own spiritual background is, we will make sure you discover this same sense of sanctuary and peace in the beauty these holy places and natural terrain have to offer.

Day 1 – Beirut (09.00 – 18.00)

The Cathedral Saint-Elijah.

In 1849, Monsignor Agabios Riachy, Metropolitan of Beirut, finished the building of the Saint Elias Cathedral. Once completed, this building was noted for the harmony of its Byzantine architecture and its beautiful oriental decorations. In 1934, the Cathedral was threatened with demolition to allow the passage of a boulevard connecting the Arch of Triumph to the Place of Martyrs. Expropriation never went to completion and the Cathedral was recovered by the Eparchy in 1994 after being damaged by the impact of Lebanese strife.

The Cathedral of Saint George Maronite.

Built in a decade, from 1884 to 1894 according to the plans of the Italian architect Giuseppe Maggiore, the Metropolitan Cathedral is a replica of the Basilica of St. Mary Major in Rome, mainly in its facade, its architectural design form Cross and coffered ceiling. It is the seat of the Archbishop of Beirut.

The Cathedral of Saint George Greek Orthodox.

Built in 1767 on the ruins and structures of the Church of the Resurrection (1st century) and nearby school Roman law, it is considered the most beautiful – and the oldest - the cathedrals and churches of Beirut.

The Cathedral of Saints Gregory and Elian.

In 1860, when it was built, this church was the first Catholic Church in Lebanon for Armenians. It was destroyed in 1901 in order to expand so that it can accommodate a large number of devotees.

Saint Louis Capuchin Church.

Built in 1864 by the Caouchin missionaries and named it in the honor of King Louis IX of France. The church is highly noticeable for its sand-stone facades, rose colored wooden windows and its now towering campanile.

The Evangelical Church.

Built in 1867, this church is the work of Anglo-American missionaries and meets the needs of the Protestant community. In Gothic and Oriental architecture with its roof of red brick, the church was completely destroyed in 1976 and rebuilt with the same stone in 1998.

Church of Saint Maron.

Built in 1875 with a Roman style. This church is known for its arcades, apses and cut stones. Saint Maron is celebrated on February 9 and it is an official holiday in Lebanon

Saint Elias Maronite Church.

The current church building dates back to 1907 and reflects more of an architectural style where the Italian architect had amalgamated yellow stones (used in the majority of Beirut buildings) the great Roman carved columns. The church was restored in 2002 and the windows were covered with colorful windows of the French artist Jacques Guiton who added a touch of modernity in the old building.

Church of the Annunciation of the Virgin Mary Greek Orthodox.

It dates from the early 19th century. It was first located in the center of the old Beirut. In 1920, the Lebanese government expropriated the land and demolished the church to expand the road known as "Maarad". The present church was officially opened in 1927 and is one of the largest Orthodox churches of old Beirut.

Saint Catherine Church (located in convent and school Zahrat Al-Ihsan).

This church is known for its magnificent iconostasis and contains a large icon of the Virgin Mary ("Our Lady of Vladimir") painted by a Russian artist as well as its modern icons on the walls.

Church of Saint Nicolas.

This church dates from 1976 and gave its name to its entourage: Rue Saint Nicolas or Saint Nicolas district whose inhabitants have adopted as their patron saint. The church was destroyed during the war but in 1991, the Archbishop Elias Aoudé placed the foundation stone of the new building which included two churches: one on the ground floor (a replica of the old church) while the other is larger and characterized by a marble iconostasis and beautiful Byzantine icons on the 1st floor.

Church of Saint Dimitri.

This church was built in the 19th century with an Oriental architectural style. It was dedicated to Saint Dimitri (or Mar Mitri for the people living in the neighborhood). The adjoining cemetery is one of the oldest in the capital

The Basilica of Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal.

This is the first church in Lebanon granted the status of basilica. It was built by the Vincentian Fathers on a hill overlooking Achrafieh. A "Memorandum of spiritual brotherhood" was signed between The Basilica of Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal and the Basilica of Our Lady of Lourdes in France on 19 November 2005, making it an oasis of prayer, meditation and peace in the heart of the capital.

Al Omari Grand Mosque.

The Al Omari Grand Mosque was the old Crusador Church of Saint John the Baptist. Built in the 12th century over the site of the Roman imperial baths. Similar to Romanesque style churches with triple apses were built in Tyre and Tartus, using recuperated material such as Roman column and capitals. In 1291, the Malouks captured Beirut and converted the church into a mosque. Named Al Omari Mosque in memory of Caliph Omar Ibn Al Khattab, it soon became

known as Jami' Al Kabir (The Great Mosque). Damaged during the Civil War, the mosque's refurbishment was completed in 2004.

Mosque of Emir Mounzer (An-Naoufara).

Located in central Beirut in western al-Omari Mosque, opposite Bab Idriss and Souk Al-Tawile, it was built in 1620 by the Emir Ibn Mounzer Suleiman Al-Tanoukhi the reign The Emir Fakherdin II. This mosque is also known as the Mosque An-Naoufara because of the fountain that was in his court. And as is the case in other mosques, a number of emirs and governors were buried in the mosque.

Zaouiyah Al-Imam Al-Ouza'i.

Located at Souk Al-Tawilé in central Beirut to Western Zaouiyah of Sheikh Ibn Arraq, the school is named after Imam Al-Ouza'i who lived Beirut and turned his home into a school of Islamic theology. In 1529, a fountain was built next to the school in memory of the Imam. The Zaouiyah held in the middle of Souk Al-Tawilé until the outbreak of the Lebanese war in 1975 that turned it into ruins. A project is preparing to rebuild in the same location it occupied.

Al-Dabbaghah Mosque.

Also known as the Holy Mosque Al-Omari (Not to be confused with the great Al-Omari Mosque) because it was built during the reign of Caliph Omar Ibn Al-Khattab, as mentioned by the famous traveler Sheikh Abdul Ghani Al-Nabulsi. It was also called the Mosque of the sea because of its proximity to the coast.

Mohammad Al-Amin Mosque.

Located in the center of the Place des Martyrs which is connected to the Riad El-Solh Square, it is distinguished by an Ottoman architectural style and Arabic. It contains a central void completely covered with a dome (with an area of 9778 m² which includes the lower floors and mezzanines). It has three entrances on the sides, north and west. It is accessed through the outdoor seating next to the Place des Martyrs or the north side by an axial inlet in the direction of the Qubla, which also included the ablution facilities. The mosque has 4 minarets with a height of 65 m. The ceiling is high and about 16 m to 20 m in the central dome. It can accommodate up to 6250 worshipers and ground floor can accommodate up to 4200 people. The mosque contains the grave of former Prime Minister Martyr Rafic Hariri (assassinated February 14, 2005).

Ain Al Mrayssé Mosque.

As indicated by the inscription above the entrance porch of the north facade, this mosque was built in the late nineteenth century, 1887-1888, by Bayham and Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah Al-Habari, the land is a gift from Sheikh Muhammad Alaya, later appointed Mufti of the Lebanese Republic.

Mosque and Mausoleum of Imam Al-Ouza'i.

The suburb Al-Ouza'i, formerly called Hantous, is located 4 kilometers south of Beirut; its mosque was known by Hantous Mosque. The name change is due to the fact that Imam Abou Amrou Abdul Rahman Ibn Amr Al-Ouza'i who had lived in his Zawiya in Souk Al-Tawilé in central Beirut and turned his home into a school of Islamic studies, was buried in 774 in a corner inside the Hantous Mosque.

Al-Msaytbeh Mosque.

Located in the district of Msaytbeh near the residence of President Saeb Salam, it was built in 1884 during the reign of Sultan Abdul Hamid II. The governor of Syria Ahmed Hamdi Pasha had partly contributed to the building cost, in addition to the contributions collected from the people of Beirut. Some refurbishments and renovations were made in 1973 and lasted until February 1975

Ras Al-Nabaa Mosque.

This mosque was built by the deceased Omar el-Ghazawi in Beirut in 1882. Some old people of Beirut reported that this building previously contained a fountain in the northern part of the outer courtyard. Many reparations and additions were done to this building during the year 1977

Day 2. South, full day tour in the provinces of Sidon and Tyre (09.00 – 18.00)

Saydet El Mantara (or Our Lady of the Guardian) in Maghdouché.

On a hill overlooking the coast and a few kilometers from Sidon, stands the sanctuary of Saydet El Mantara or Our Lady of the Guardian (from the Arabic “Natra” which means “wait”). Popular Christian tradition in Lebanon says that it was on this hill in Maghdouché that Virgin Mary awaited the return of Jesus from his apostolic wanderings. An annual pilgrimage takes place in Maghdouché on September 18 to mark the feast of the birth of the Virgin Mary.

The church of Saint Nicolas in Sidon.

This church was built in the 15th century and has the biggest dome in the city. Its altar dates back to the Mameluke period.

The Cathedral of Saint Nicolas in Sidon.

This cathedral lies outside the boundaries of ancient Sidon near the Greek Orthodox archbishopric. It dates back to 1896. The cathedral and the archbishopric contain frescoes (scenes from the old and new testaments) as well as mosaics from the 6th century. They were brought from a ruined church discovered in the village of Anan.

The site of Cana of Galilée.

Evidence that Cana El Jaleel (Cana of Galilee) is located in the south of Lebanon demonstrates the historical and Christian importance of this part of Lebanon. Today, in addition to the sanctuary of El Jaleel at Cana and and of Al Charquié south of Nabatiyeh, this region is considered a holy place. The cave of Cana has been restored by the Ministry of Tourism and declared an historic site.

The church of Saydet El Tallé (the church of Our Lady of the Hill)

Deir El Qamar. In the maze of old houses and narrow streets of Deir El Qamar, a small staircase leads to the front of the church of Saydet El Tallé, or Our Lady of the Hill, which was constructed on the ruins of a Phoenician temple dedicated to Astarte. Extended, restored and rebuilt, the church is dedicated to the miraculous Virgin Mary. The first Sunday of August is celebrated lavishly in this the church enclosed by the buildings of the monk’s convent.

The Great Mosque el-Omari.

It was named after the second orthodox caliph “Omar Ben el-Khattab”. It is one of the most beautiful architectural buildings of the thirteenth century, and the widest mosque of Sidon.

El-Baher Mosque.

Travelers from Sidon port used to pray in this mosque, which is located in front of the maritime castle. It belongs to the Mamluk age, and it is the only one remaining in Sidon from that period. It was built by “Hasan Ben Sawah” 1373 as stated by the graved plaque above the entry. A new minaret was recently added.

El-Barrani Mosque.

It was built by the Emir “Fakhreddin el-Ma’ni the Second” outside the fences of the old Sidon; therefore, it was known by El-Barrani (the external). It is near the seacoast, and it is considered a lively model of the Islamic architecture of the Ottoman age.

Qotaish Mosque.

This mosque combines a lot of the Islamic architectural arts. Its designs are apparent in all its sections. It is about 100 meters from the south of el-Qikha mosque. It was built at the expenses of el-Sheikh “Ali Qotaish” in 1592 inside the old Sidon.

Bab el-Saray Mosque.

It is one of the oldest standing mosques in Sidon. Its construction dates from the period when the Europeans occupied the city according to the plaque above the northern entry.

El-Qikhya Mosque.

It is an example of the Islamic architecture of the Ottoman period. Located in the old Sidon, it is surrounded by crossroads from the East and Bahr el-Abed alley from the West. It was built by “Mustafa el-Qatkhada” in 1624. It rises above the level of the road, and it is decorated with six domes, muqarnas, and a marble minbar colored in white and blue, with four columns decorated with different geometrical designs.

Bahaa Eddine Al Hariri Mosque.

At the northern entrance to Saida is the mosque of Bahaa Eddine Al Hariri near the East Boulevard. Of a particularly distinctive architectural style in Lebanon and the Middle East, it renews the main features of the mosques architecture. The adopted architectural style is the Ottoman architecture where a dome covers the central prayer hall entirely. The mosque consists of prayer squares, and the center is covered by a dome resting on eight octagonal peripherals pillars. The mosque covers an area of 7500 m² and can accommodate up to 5,000 worshippers in two interior rooms for women and men.

El-Imam Hasan el-Asqari Mosque.

It is one of the oldest mosques in the South. It is said that it was built in 800. It is composed of two sections: old and new. The old part is composed of a room surmounted by a dome, with four mihrabs at the four sides, which is a unique phenomenon. Above the entry is a plaque that identifies the name of the founder as “Ali Ben Sa’d ed-Din Fakhr ed-Din”.

Tyre Mosque.

In the middle of the old city that recalls the scent of the history, “Abbas el-Mohamed”, the governor of Tyre, built the Tyre Mosque in 1766. It was strong, with a high minaret. The magistrate of Tyre, “Abdullah el-Maghrebi” was buried there. The mosque was renewed for the last time in 1997.

Day 3. Békaa Valley, full day tour in the provinces of Hermel, Zahlé and Baalbeck (09.00 – 18.00)

The Monastery of Saint Maroun in Hermel.

This amazing three-story cave is cut into sheer rock more than 90 meters high. Known as “Magharet El Raheb” or Cave of the Monks, this is, in fact, a pilgrims’ monument. An altar, a staircase and small cells carved from the rock make up this place of devotion, marked by humidity and trusteeship.

The church of Our Lady of Béchwat.

Béchwat lies on the versant of the western chain of Mount Lebanon. It is 110 km from Beirut and 19 km from Baalbeck. It is 1300 meters above sea level and was named after an Egyptian Saint, Anba Bishey. The village has ancient ruins (oil mills, statues and sarcophagi ...) dating back to the Phoenician, Roman, Byzantine and Arab periods. But the village is famous nowadays because of the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Bechwat. Lebanese people who belong to both, Muslim and Christian religions visit this place for blessing or to ask for a remedy for a sick person.

Monastery and church of Our Lady of Nativity – Ras Baalbeck.

This convent has a miraculous church. It was built during the Byzantine period and restored in the sixteenth century.

Hermit’s Caves – Fourzol. In the Békaa plain, 56 km from Beirut, numerous caves are cut into the rocks around the small village of Fourzol, which in former times was an important Christian center. These caves sheltered monks and hermits who attest to an isolated and intense monastic life.

Our Lady of Zahlé and Békaa.

Virgin Mary has a special historical importance in the hearts of the inhabitants of the Békaa region in general and in the hearts of people of Zahlé in particular who believe in her active presence in protecting the city and its people. The statue of Our Lady of Zahlé and the Békaa region now stands carrying the child Jesus in one hand and a bunch of grapes in the other hand, while Jesus is carrying an ear of wheat.

The church of Saint Charbel – Zahlé.

It is a recently built church dedicated to Saint Charbel. Inaugurated in November 2006, it is affiliated to the Monastery of Saint Anthony the Grand in Zahlé and to the Lebanese Maronite Order.

Maqam el-Nabi Yusha' Ben Noun.

It is a Maqam to the east of Rasm el-Hadath town on the road of el-Hermel.

Maqam el-Nabi Najjoun.

Located east of the village of Tarayya, this sanctuary is formed by an ancient tomb covered with a dome, surrounding a small fountain that keeps the same level of flow during all seasons, summer as winter; its water is inexhaustible in the dry season and even in winter it does not increase, that is why it is considered a blessed water by visitors of this sanctuary.

Maqam el-Nabi Suleiman.

It is located outside of Younine town to the Southwest. The Nabi Suleiman (the prophet Suleiman) has many miracles about which speak the inhabitants and the neighbors. There's also a fresh water source at its extremity from which people drink in order to be blessed.

The Great Umayyad Mosque.

Built in the first century after the Hegira, during the Umayyad reign, on the remains of a Byzantine church, it is the largest mosque of all Baalbek. It is 60 meters long and 50 meters wide. It contains in the middle 30 columns carried from roman temples neighboring the castle. Some of them are decorated with Corinthian capitals either of granite or of massive stones. The walls of the mosques rise for 8 meters. Its architecture is similar to the Umayyad mosque in Damascus. It includes a courtyard surrounded by porticoes and a square minaret that stands in the courtyard like a war tower. The mosque's walls hold many inscriptions that are decrees belonging to the Mamluk age. It was left ruined for a long time during the Ottoman and the modern ages. Lately, it has been restored and rehabilitated to perform regular prayers in there.

Day 4, the North, a full day tour in the Villages of Qadisha, Qannoubine, Miziara, Ehden, Kfifane, and Jrabta (09.00 – 18.00)

Wadi Qadicha or the Holy Valley.

In the high majestic mountains of the north, Christianity's long presence is marked by countless sanctuaries and places of devotion. The deep gorge of Wadi Qadisha (or Qadisha Valley) opens dramatically at the feet of Bécharré village, and then branches into many small valleys to make its tortuous way to the sea. In there, spiritual and mystical life have found the best place for prayer, meditation, devoutness, and the dedication of oneself to the worship of God in natural caves that were rarely touched by man and in caves engraved for piety and mortification, where life is an endless silent dialogue aimed at meeting God face to face.

Deir Saydet Qannoubine (Monastery of our Lady of Qannoubine) in the Qannoubin Valley.

In a grandiose and almost wild setting overlooking the small towns of Blawza and Diman, stands Deir Qannoubine, which from the 15th to the 19th centuries was the residence of the Maronite patriarchs. Built into the rock, the monastery's church is a model of simplicity and austerity. A nearby annex to the monastery is the chapel of Saint Marina where 18 Maronite patriarchs are entombed. It is said that Saint Marina was falsely accused and performed long and hard penitence here. Later she was consecrated as the spiritual godmother of the valley.

The visit also includes **Deir Mar Elishaa (Monastery of Saint Eliseus)**, **Deir Mar Sarkis (Monastery of Saint Serjurs)**, **Deir Es-Salib (Monastery of the Cross)** and the **Chapel of Saydet Hawqa (The Chapel of our Lady of Hawqa)**

Saydet al-Marahem (our Lady of Mercy) in Miziara.

It is a large modern sanctuary dedicated to Virgin Mary built by a wealthy Lebanese family. It has a high tower crowned by the statue of the Virgin Mary at the foot of which life-size statues illustrate passages from the Gospel (The 12 disciples, the nativity, the baptism of Christ, the flight into Egypt, the miracle at Cana, the Last Supper, etc..). It is served by the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament.

Saydet el-Hosn (our Lady of the Fortress) in Ehden.

In the north eastern part of Ehden and on a very high hill that overlooks most of North Lebanon villages and a few Syrian lands, the ancient inhabitants of Ehden built an indomitable fortress crowned today with two Maronite churches, an ancient and a modern one, dedicated to Virgin Mary "our Lady of the Fortress": **The ancient church of "our Lady of the Fortress"** was built in 1283 dedicated to the Virgin Mary, their patron, to be their fortress and refuge. This church was rebuilt many times between 1300 and 1705 and has been renovated in 1836 after the destruction mentioned by French traveler and poet Lamartine when he visited the region in 1833. **The New Church of "our Lady of the Fortress"** is adjacent the old church and was inaugurated in 1989. Its architecture is not at all traditional: it is composed of a large round church surmounted by a huge white statue of Virgin Mary with open arms.

Covent of Saydet El-Nourieh (Covent of Our Lady of Light) in Hamat.

At the top of a cliff overlooking the north coast of Lebanon stands a Greek Orthodox monastery known as Deir el Nouriyeh or Our Lady of the Light. Steep stairs near the monastery lead down to a cave carved in the cliff, exposed to the wind and sea. It is here that the story of the light that gives its name to the monastery is celebrated. It is said that two sailors were in peril on a stormy sea when the Virgin appeared to them as a light and guided them gently to the shore.

Monastery of Saint Cyprien and Justinian – Kfifane.

The Monastery of saint Cyprien and Justinian in Kfifane village near Batroun is today a pilgrimage site thanks to the Blessed Nematallah Kassab El Haridni, who is buried in this modest place. Built well before the 17th century, in 1766 the Lebanese Maronite Order transformed the monastery into a seminary for the study of theology, philosophy, literature and law. Among its students was not only Father El Hardini but also Charbel Makhlouf, who in 1989 was canonized as a saint.

Monastery of Saint Joseph/Sanctuary of Saint Rafqa – Jrabta.

In the deep “wilderness” east of Batroun, some distance from Kfifane where the Blessed Father Hardini lived, is the Monastery of Mar Youssef Al Dahr at Jrabta. Surrounded with ancient trees, the monastery lies at the heart of a lonely region notable for its savage beauty. It is here that the Blessed Sister Rafqa is buried.

El-Baher Mosque.

At about 6 kilometers from the south of Tripoli, on the seacoast, stands an old mosque known by el-Baher Mosque (the mosque of the sea). According to the repeated stories of the Qalamoun’s habitants, it dates to more than 800 years ago, as it is stated on a plaque hung on the wall near the minbar, on which are graved three lines saying that it was constructed in 1132, that is during the reign of the crusaders over the coast of el-Sham. It was renewed by el-Sheikh “Ali Monallah el-Baghdadi” who died in 1778.

Ain el-Jami’ prayer hall.

It is located on the seacoast, to the south of el-Baher Mosque. According to the repeated stories of the Qalamoun’s habitants, it dates from the crusader wars period. The Muslims built it at a fountain near which they used to be stationed waiting for the Jihad. Later, the place was transformed to a place for prayer, then to mosque that was called el-Ain Mosque (mosque of the fountain).

Tripoli. The Great Mosque El-Mansouri.

It is the largest mosque of Tripoli and Lebanon. It was built at the order of the sultan “el-Ashraf Khalil Ben Qala’un” in 1294 in el-Nouri district. The sultan “el-Nasser Mohamed Ben Qala’un” built the porticoes surrounding its exterior courtyard in 1315. It has four doors, two of them in the east side, one in the west side, and one in the north side. This latest is the biggest. It is decorated and holds a historical inscription, as well as it is surmounted by the four-floor-Moroccan-style minaret.

Tainal Mosque.

At three minutes of walk from “al-Nour” square, at the northern entry of Tripoli, stands the most beautiful and majestic mosque of Lebanon, the mosque of the “Emir Saif ed-Din Tainal el-Hajeb” (el-Hajeb = the Chamberlain). He built it in 1336 outside the city in the middle of the gardens, and it is now surrounded by buildings. It consists of a marble courtyard with four rooms where were held the meetings of Tripoli’s cadis (magistrates) during the Mamluk age: Shafiite cadi, Hanafite cadi, Malekite cadi and Hanbalite cadi.

Day 5, Mount Lebanon and Jbeil villages, a full day tour in the (09.00 – 18.00)

The Murals of the Church of Bahdidat.

Bahdidat is a small village located 550 meters above sea level north of Byblos. Here, an old Maronite rectangular chapel, dedicated to Saint Theodore, contains beautiful murals. The vault tells the story of salvation in two stages according to the Old and New Testament. The relative part to the Old Testament occupies the bow hanger, while the lower arch and apse depict scenes from the New Testament.

The Church of Saint Simeon-Mar Simaan.

To the east of Byblos, on a small hill, you can see an old chapel dedicated to Saint Simeon and which is designated in the region by Mar Semaan. At the center of this chapel, built by the Crusaders, stands a huge marble column.

The Monastery of Mar Maroun Annaya: Hermitage and Burial of Saint Charbel.

In the peaceful greens of Annaya rests the remains of the Lebanese saint Mar Charbel. Born on May 8, 1828 at Bqa'aqafra, one of the highest villages in the Cedars region, Mar Charbel is now an object of worship and is the supreme example of hard work and absolute devotion to God. From an early age he was nicknamed "the holy" because of his great piety. In 1875, he retired to the hermitage overlooking the valley Ehmej which was later transformed into a fervent pilgrimage, one of the busiest in the country. He lived there in the greatest austerity, 23 years until his death in December 24, 1898 while celebrating Christmas mass at the age of 70. Beatified in 1965, he was canonized in October 1977.

Bkirke, the actual residence of the Maronite Patriarch.

On a hill that overlooks the Bay of Jounieh, stands the imposing structure of the Maronite patriarchy which has been there since 1830.

The Cathedral of our Lady of Lebanon – Harissa.

On a hill that reverently overlooks the Bay of Jounieh and contemplates Beirut and the vast horizon stands the sanctuary of our Lady of Lebanon. It's a place that shines with devotion to Saint Mary. Believers constructed this place to worship the Virgin Mother, our Lady of Lebanon. The statue of Saint Mary stands at the top of the structure. It is a white statue that touches the blue sky and is surrounded by roaming clouds. It has been here since 1908, resting on a cement foundation. The statue is reached by a spiral flight of stairs. Inside there is a small church where to thousands of believers come to pray and to hold marriage ceremonies. The number of people doubles in May as it is the month dedicated to Virgin Mary. A modern cathedral can be found beside the ancient sanctuary and in which Pope John Paul II celebrated mass on his visit to Lebanon in 1997

The Monastery of Saint Anthony of Padua (Khashbao) – Ghazir.

This monastery lies upon the hill of “Khashbao” that overlooks the Bay of Jounieh. “Khashbao” is a Syriac word that means a house for invocation and prayer. The Lebanese Maronite Order constructed it in 1752. In 1820, the church was built and was dedicated to Saint Anthony of Padua. It is one of the most beautiful churches. It is 30m long, 15m wide and 19m high. The monastery was inhabited by the Armenian monks till 1890. Then the Capuchin monks came from France and stayed in it. They left it during the 2nd decade of the 20th century. It was deserted until 1985 when the Maronite Order renovated it adding a new aisle where it became an architectural piece of art. In 1837, the Polish poet, Julius Souatski visited the place and stayed there for a few days where he wrote his poetic masterpiece “Anheli”.

Byblos Mosque

Near the historical castle of Byblos town, and in the middle of a garden covered with green grass, stands the Ottoman mosque of the town, in the place where the first Muslims built “el-Fateh Mosque” during the reign of the orthodox caliphs. It was built by the Ottoman sultan “Abdul Majid” in 1648. The date is graved inside the mosque. Later on, it was renewed by the Emir “Yussuf el-Shehab” in 1783.