

THE SWITCHERS

Your guide to off-the-
beaten-path sustainable
travel and shopping

Lebanon





— SPOTLIGHT

Lebanon

Renowned for its warm hospitality and gastronomy, Lebanon's tourism sector has long been one of the country's leading economic sectors. The thriving sector has provided the perfect opportunity for sustainable tourism initiatives to take root and grow. This guide will help you travel beyond the commonly-known tourist attractions, and gain a deeper understanding of the country and the innovative entrepreneurs who call it home. This trip, have a different kind of experience: one that is as responsible and environmentally-conscious as it is fun.

Planning a trip can be overwhelming, so we kept this guide simple. It is separated into four sections:

– THE FOUR SECTIONS YOU WILL FIND:



**WHERE TO
STAY**



**WHERE TO
EAT**



**WHAT TO
DO**



**WHAT TO
BRING HOME**

Each section features the projects and creations of our Lebanon-based Switchers — the green entrepreneurs creating circular, sustainable economies to benefit their country and beyond.

Whether you are traveling for business or work, we hope you discover something new and inspiring through the Switchers highlighted in this guide.

Happy travels!
The Switchers





— HIGHLIGHTS

15

more than 15 national parks and protected areas

including Al Chouf Cedar Nature Reserve and the Abraham River Gorge Valley

1.69

million visitors

to Lebanon in 2016

123,500

jobs in Lebanon

directly supported by tourism



Where to Stay

Venture out of Beirut and discover Lebanon's impressive array of eco-lodges and boutique Bed & Breakfasts. From beachfront properties to mountainous terrain, our Switchers offer different accommodation types for a variety of budgets and travel styles. Although WiFi is available, you may consider leaving your laptops and smartphones at home this trip — these sustainable accommodations are the prime spot for a digital detox.



Bkerzay

Chouf, Deir Dourit

— PERFECT FOR

Families looking for a hiking vacation in the mountains without the need to camp

Bkerzay is a conservation project nestled in the heart of the Chouf, a bountiful cedar-tree region. The part-solar-powered property was built using traditional stone architecture to blend in with the surrounding olive and fig trees. There are different hiking routes in the area to soak up all the lush nature. Prefer to rest onsite? You can choose from relaxing by the infinity pool, going for a fresh meal at their restaurant, taking a pottery class at a master potter's studio or browsing through their gift shop for local, artisanal goodies.

— ACCOMMODATION

All rooms, suites and guest houses are furnished with restored, vintage furniture and fully



equipped with en-suite bathrooms, air-conditioning, ceiling fans, electrical outlets and WiFi. Guests are also provided with slippers to really feel at home. Pricing ranges from €105 to €280 per night per room, hosting between 2-3 persons and includes breakfast.

— GETTING THERE

Bkerzay is a 45-min drive from Beirut and has free parking onsite. They can also help arrange transportation for guests from Beirut airport and other locations.

— HOW TO BOOK



Kareem Salman, +961 351 2020



[Facebook Page](#)



[Website](#)



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— BEIT AL
BATROUN

Beit al Batroun, Byblos

— PERFECT FOR

Peace and serenity in a kid-free setting with great style.

Beit al Batroun was founded in 2013 by mosaic artist, Colette Kahil. This boutique Bed & Breakfast is a dream-built-true with much care. A haven of hospitality with sea views to provide a space for guests to rest as well as a home for all the beautiful antiques and upcycled furnishings she'd been collecting over the years. This serene spot is just a short drive from livelier towns to grab dinner or catch a concert. You can also take a day trip to visit some fine wineries nearby.

— ACCOMMODATION

With 5 double en-suite bedrooms, peace is guaranteed as with a freshly-prepared breakfast buffet every morning using local produce. Kids over 12 years old are welcome. All rooms have air-conditioning, access to WiFi and the different common seating areas by the pool. Pricing ranges from €165 to €195 per room per night.



— GETTING THERE

Beit al Batroun is a 40-min drive from Beirut and has free parking onsite. They can also help arrange transportation for guests from Beirut airport and other locations.

— HOW TO BOOK



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Jabalna Ecolodge

Al Qoubaiyat, Akkar

— PERFECT FOR

Travellers looking to make new nature-loving friends through the hostel experience

Jabalna Ecolodge is an eco-friendly hostel, located in Al Qoubaiyat, a village in the Akkar Governorate, North of Lebanon. This ecolodge is run by Sergi Karam and his family who pride themselves on its harmonious coexistence with nature in the middle of a pine forest. A quiet and peaceful spot ideal for nature lovers that enjoy going for hikes during the day and sleeping under the stars by night.

— ACCOMMODATION

This project contains many bungalows, suites and camping tents with the possibility to hire a guide for hiking trails, horse riding excursions and other adventure tours. All bungalows and suites have an en-suite bathroom and kitchenette, with the capacity to



host between 2 and 6 guest. Pricing ranges from €45 to €132 per night per room, according to occupancy. Camping tents are available from €15 per night. Guests have access to free internet, hot water, and an outdoor communal barbecue.

— GETTING THERE

Jabalna Ecologie is a 2 hour and 45-min drive from Beirut and has free parking onsite. They can also help arrange transportation for guests from other locations in the country.

— HOW TO BOOK



Sergi on +961 3 542 935



[Jabalna Ecolodge Facebook Page](#)



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— LA MAISON DE LA FORÊT

La Maison de la Forêt

Bkassine

— PERFECT FOR

Reconnecting with nature as a family, a corporate getaway, or as a group of friends.

La Maison de la Forêt was born in 2013 from a private-public partnership looking to promote sustainable tourism in the Jezzine area of Lebanon. This eco-touristic site was built with utmost respect for its natural surroundings to the point that it blends in with them. You can choose from hiking, mountain biking, descending waterfalls, or visiting their treetop adventure park to make the most of your stay in nature. Don't forget to fuel up at their outdoor restaurant, Beit el Ghabeh, serving up tasty traditional Lebanese food.

— ACCOMMODATION

What started off as a 5-bungalow project has since grown to a 25-bungalow and 5-room lodge facility complete with a conference center and an outdoor activity



calendar to match. Accommodation pricing starts at €95 per night for a two-person room and goes up to €300 per night for a 3-bedroom bungalow for six people.

— GETTING THERE

La Maison de la Forêt is located 70 km from Beirut and has free parking onsite. Their website has detailed instructions of how to get there by car here. They can also help arrange transportation for guests from Beirut airport, and other locations.

— HOW TO BOOK



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What to Bring Home

Why buy standard souvenirs when Lebanon is home to so many creative green entrepreneurs? Our Switchers have taken their creative eye for design and applied it to upcycle and transform waste into unique products that benefit local artisans and community groups across the country. Pick up a one-of-a-kind item — it is only fitting to accompany your once-in-a-lifetime trip.





Lama Yulu

— WHAT IS IT

Lama Yulu is a Beirut-based social enterprise created by the married couple **Jana Saleh** and **Gaston Valenzuela** in 2017. The eco-conscious brand collects and washes the inner tubing of old tyres, a major pollutant of beach shores, transforming them into stylish bracelet and accessories. Jana and Gaston, work with local manufacturers for laser cutting to create their more complex designs. This way they include and support the local workforce, meaning each of Lama Yulu's products is proudly made in Lebanon.

— HOW MUCH

Prices range from €15 for simple cuffs and bracelets to €45 for more intricate designs.

— WHERE TO BUY

At the Lama Yulu yoga studio where you can also catch a class in this feel-good eco-haven, or online at www.lamayulu.com/collections.

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GGRIL

— WHAT IS IT

Green Glass Recycling Initiative - Lebanon (GGRIL) is one of Ziad Abichaker's many recycling projects that he undertakes with his team at **Cedar Environmental**.

All the glass collected from their own recycling bins dotted around Beirut are channeled to the last six artisan glow blowers to support and revive this traditional craft. It is through initiatives like this that Ziad earned his title as Lebanon's Garbage King!

— HOW MUCH

Prices range from €3 for a set of espresso cups to €35 for a glass lamp.

— WHERE TO BUY

From Souk El Tayeb's Saturday and Wednesday markets, which you can combine with lunch. GGRIL products are also stocked at a number of stores in Beirut. See their Facebook page for a list of locations.

 [Facebook Page](#)

[S](#) [Read the Story on Switchers](#) >



NK by Nour Kays

— WHAT IS IT

Nour Kays, a young Lebanese designer, decided to put her creative skills to good use and came up with a solution to the plastic waste problem she saw building up around her. From upcycled plastic bags, she developed a light, resistant material with which she creates beautiful bags and other fun accessories. It is through these functional and environmentally-friendly fashion items that she raises awareness about plastic pollution and its grave consequences.

— HOW MUCH

Prices range from €8.50 for a funky animal keychain to €85 for the



elegant weave clutch bag.

— WHERE TO BUY

You can visit Nour at her atelier by appointment, where you'll find most of her stock. Contact her on +96171479930 or via her [Facebook Page](#) to coordinate a visit. Some of her products are also stocked at [Boutique Hub Beirut](#) and [Metal & Wood](#) in Beirut.

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Olidor Soaps

— WHAT IS IT

Mohamad El Dheiby founded the olive-centered social enterprise, Olidor, in their native North of Lebanon along with his family in 2011. While their main objective is to sell extra virgin olive oil from small-scale farmers as a way of improving their access to market, they have also created a natural soap line, Olisoap, to use any oil that falls below extra virgin standards. They currently produce the artisan soap in four fragrances using local herbs: calming camomile, lush lavender, fresh pine, and fruity cherry. They are also working on a special soap for men's beard care. These ultra-moisturizing cosmetic goodies are small enough to fit in your suitcase

and make great gifts to take home with you.

— HOW MUCH

Each fragranced soap bar is priced at €3 each, the traditional laurel soap at €1.50, and the special soap for men's beard care at €4.50. They are available for shipping to Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Canada.

— WHERE TO BUY

Made using a unique cold soap making process, it is widely available in local pharmacies in the city of Tripoli, North Lebanon. They also deliver to anywhere in Lebanon for orders of 6 or more bars of soap made through their [Facebook Page](#).



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What to Do

Once referred to as the ‘Paris of the Middle East’, Beirut is a lively city brimming with plenty of things to see and do. The capital has had to rebuild a lot of itself after a tumultuous civil war that tore the city in two from 1975 to 1990. Nowadays, the city wears its scars with pride and as a reminder that united they are stronger than divided. While the capital may harbor most of the excitement, the entire country is laden with gems waiting to be discovered. Here, our Switcher, Maya Karkour, who founded the Beirut-based company [EcoConsulting](#) to provide sustainable solutions for the construction industry shares, with the help of the local outdoor tour operator [LibanTrek](#), her top tips on what to do when visiting her beloved country.





— DAY ONE

On your first day, it is worth starting by heading North of Beirut to see the impressive Jeita Grotto caves. After a morning of marveling at these natural underground wonders, head to seaside town of Byblos. With its rich historical heritage and bustling souks (traditional markets), you will have plenty to explore. It is worth staying the night so the following morning you can visit [the town's UNESCO World Heritage site](#) as a Phoenician port and one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities of the world, where the Phoenician alphabet originated from. You'll find a nearby haven with fellow Switcher, Colette Kahil, at her Bed & Breakfast, [Beit al Batroun](#).

— DAY TWO

To carry on with day 2, head a little further north to the [Qadisha Valley](#), home to another UNESCO site that is best discovered on foot along the [Lebanon Mountain Trail](#). This trail will lead you to the cedars for a stroll among the legendary old majestic trees, found in the heart of some spectacular mountainous formations. You will surely be struck by the magic of the place from the panoramic road to the Bekaa Valley, crossing the highest pass at 2600 m to end the day at Orghosh Springs. If you're a nature lover, you may consider spending the night in this incredible remote mountain setting.

— DAY THREE

Day 3, and you'll be reluctant to leave the peace and beauty of the Orgosh springs, but fear not as Jupiter awaits your visit at his temple in Baalbek to take you back in time. At this point, some lunch and wine-tasting is in order to savor the sights seen so far nearby in Bekaa Valley, the country's renowned wine-making region. We recommend the sustainable wineries of [Chateau Kefraya](#), [Domaine Wardy](#) and [Reserve Ammiq](#). Afterwards, head out on the highway to pass by the [Chouf Cedar Reserve](#) for some great views over the fertile valley and a perfect pit stop before visiting the [Beiteddine Palace](#)

and spending the evening in Deir al-Qamar, a charming Medieval town with good nightlife. You will not regret staying the night at the neighbouring family-run ecolodge, [Bkerzay](#).

— THE FOLLOWING DAY

The following day, head to the south via the mountain road to visit the pinewoods of Jezzine for a great photo opportunity at its high waterfall on the way to the coastal road, past Sidon. Next stop from here is the southernmost point, UNESCO site of [Tyre](#), the proud Phoenician city that long resisted Alexander The Great.





— MOHAMMAD AL-AMIN MOSQUE

Here, you should check out the [Roman Hippodrome and Necropolis](#) before having lunch by the sea with a swim in the Mediterranean sea, if the weather allows for it. Then, take the coastal road back up toward Beirut to visit [Sidon](#) to catch a glimpse of the Crusader sea castle, [Caravanserai](#) (roadside inns travellers would stop to rest on the Silk Route) but, most of all, the teeming popular covered souks. End the day in the capital, just in time to enjoy its entertaining nightlife, in particular in the popular areas of [Badaro](#), [Hamra](#), [Mar Mikhael](#) or [Gemmayzeh](#) which are laden with plenty of bars and gastronomic hotspots.

— THE LAST DAY

The last day is best spent in the capital, starting at the Beirut Souks in the heart of the Central District. To follow a 2.5-km walking circuit to visit some 50 historic sites, simply follow the [Beirut Heritage Trail](#) marked by bronze medallions



grouted into the sidewalk. You'll find yourself weaving through upto 5,000 years worth of historic sites in this contemporary business and commercial hub. These include gems from the Ottoman, Phoenician and Roman-Byzantine eras. The neighboring Zaitunay Bay in the West Marina makes for an ideal spot to end the day dining with the sunset and taking a stroll along the boardwalk. Some indoor cultural highlights include the Beirut National Museum, the MIM Mineral Museum, the Sursock Modern Art Museum as well as the urban cultural center, Beit Beirut.





What and Where to Eat

Lebanon is famous worldwide for its refined gastronomy that is greatly influenced by its deep-rooted culture and history. While our Switchers work in varying sustainable sectors, they have plenty of recommendations on what to eat and where.

FOOD PRICING RANGES:

€ = USD 5-25

€€ = USD 25-65

€€€ = USD 65-100+



—WHERE TO EAT

Switcher [Souk El Tayeb](#) started Lebanon's first ever farmer's market in Beirut back in 2004. Their mission was to support the country's small-scale farmers, a third of which are certified organic. Since then, the social enterprise has gone from strength to strength, widening their scope to include capacity building and awareness raising. You're not going to want to miss this feast for the eyes and taste buds. The market operates on Wednesdays at Gefinor Center from 12pm to 6pm, on Thursdays at The Village Dbayeh from 11am to 6pm and, on Saturdays at Beirut Souks from 9am to 2pm.

For more delicious, seasonal, and healthy food choices in Beirut, we also recommend visiting Switcher Imad Khairallah's family-run restaurant, [Kitchen Confidential](#). Motivated by his personal struggles with food intolerances, Imad teamed up with his mother, a passionate cook and brother to open up a small takeaway shop in 2013. This year, their business has morphed into a fully-fledged restaurant with mouth-watering options for all-special dietary preferences.

If you're planning on going for a hike with one of the Switcher ecotourism initiatives previously mentioned, you should pick up some [TAQA](#) energy



bars or cookies for fuel. Their nutrient-packed bars are based on an old Lebanese recipe and available in four different flavors: Almond Rose, Pistachio Orange Blossom, Coconut Lemon, and Hazelnut Cacao. You'll find their products stocked at over 300 points of sale across the country. This includes the big retailers such as Spinneys, Aoun and Goodies as well as other small ones, and health shops. Prices range from €1.75 to €3.50 per bar and you can also order them [online](#).

In terms of what to eat, here are the highlights:

Fatteh makes for a perfect breakfast dish with its cooked chickpeas on a bed of crunchy pita bread croutons topped with yoghurt, garlic, cumin, olive oil, and toasted pine nuts. [Mezze](#) dishes, like the chickpea and sesame paste dip, [Hummus](#), or the roasted aubergine dip, [Babaganoush](#), are classics meant for sharing any time of day throughout the Levant. Another tasty treat is [Mana'eesh](#), a pizza-style dough base topped with [Za'atar](#) (a ground mix of dried thyme, oregano, marjoram and toasted sesame seeds), white cheese or both. Keep a lookout for them at Souk al Tayeb's weekly food markets!

Another must-try is [Kibbeh](#). This traditional dish is made from bulgur wheat, onions, very finely minced beef or lamb seasoned with the ground Seven Spices mix comprising of black pepper, allspice, cinnamon, nutmeg, coriander, cloves, and ginger. Before being baked in a tray or fried in small patties, they are stuffed with some more spiced minced meat mixture with fried onions and pine nuts.

In more recent times, an equally delicious vegetarian version using pumpkin and sweet potato has also gained popularity.

For those with a sweet tooth, the Lebanese are also famous for their [Baklawa](#) pastries. These delicate desserts are made of several layers of fine phyllo-pastry filled with crushed nuts, typically pistachios, almonds, cashews and pine nuts. Before they are cut and served as bite-size pieces, they are soaked in sugar syrup with rose or orange blossom water giving them great fragrant flavor.

[Tawlet](#) (€€) is a good choice for a contemporary take on traditional Lebanese food prepared by different farmers from around the country each week. [Bioland](#) is a great option for a delicious, organic weekend, open-air buffet in the country with plenty of activities to keep your kids well entertained in a farm setting. More upscale dining options in Beirut including [Al Sakhra Cliff House](#) (€€), [Liza](#) (€€€) and [Villa Clara](#) (€€€).

Other traditional vegetarian dishes not to be missed are [Mjadarah](#), [Fat-toush](#) salad, and fried cauliflower with [sumac spice](#) and [tahini](#) sauce.



Credits and Disclaimer

To see the location of all businesses and sites mentioned, visit our custom map.



[Access the Lebanon Google Map](#)

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The Switchers travel guide was created by Mayya Hussein and Hilary Duff, with assistance from Eman El-Sherbiny, Daniel Hires and Shaimaa Emam.

Have comments or questions? We would love to hear from you at



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A special thanks to the Switchers in Lebanon, whose knowledge, talents, and innovations made this guide a reality!

Follow the stories of Mediterranean changemakers online:



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— DISCLAIMER

The Switchers is a community of inspiring green entrepreneurs and changemakers in the Mediterranean region.

It is also a place where entrepreneurs of a similar passion for the environment can meet.

The Switchers are individuals, enterprises or civil society organizations implementing innovative and ecological solutions that contribute to sustainable and fair consumption and production models. They are active in a variety of fields, such as organic farming, green tourism, renewable energy, or waste management.

The platform theswitchers.eu tells their stories of sustainable transformation and change. We aim to contribute towards a more differentiated picture of the region, and shine a light on the people who are working on a greener economy.

The Switchers platform has been developed by the [Regional Activity Centre for Sustainable Consumption and Production \(SCP/RAC\)](#) in the framework of the [SwitchMed Programme](#).

The [SwitchMed Programme](#) is implemented under the coordination of the [United Nations Industrial Development Organization \(UNIDO\)](#) and is executed in collaboration with the [United Nations Environment Programme \(UN Environment\)](#), [Economy Division](#); and the [Regional Activity Centre for Sustainable Consumption and Production \(SCP/RAC\)](#) a component of the [United Nations Environment Programme-Mediterranean Action Plan \(UN Environment/MAP\)](#), in close coordination with the [European Commission](#). SwitchMed implementing partners work to accelerate the transition to Green and Circular Economy through capacity development for resource efficiency in the manufacturing industry, training for start-ups and entrepreneurs to develop skills in eco-design, green business plans, marketing and financing for sustainable products and

services, agreements with the political leaders to establish a regulatory and legal framework, empowerment of civil society organisations to pioneer socially innovative solutions that tackle environmental challenges, and an action network of interested parties to connect with similar initiatives and networks, exchange information and broaden current activities

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