

# Lebanon

Located in the Middle East, bordering the Mediterranean Sea, between Israel and Syria.

About .7 times the size of Connecticut

Climate: Mild to cool, wet winters and hot, dry summers. Lebanon mountains experience heavy winter snows.

Capital: Beirut

Population: 4,017,095 (126th largest in the world)



Thanks to its location at the crossroads of Asia, Europe, and Africa, Lebanon has been shaped by many civilizations throughout history. Its position as a meeting point for diverse peoples is evident in the extraordinary richness of its archaeological sites and historical monuments. From Stone Age settlements to Phoenician city-states, from Roman temples to rock-cut Christian hermitages, from Crusader Castles to Mamluke mosques and Ottoman *hammams*, the country's historical sites are a true encyclopedia of ancient and modern world history.

Modern Lebanese society is characterized by this same cultural diversity. Most Lebanese people speak Arabic, English, and French. As you walk the streets of downtown Beirut, you will pass domed mosques and steepled churches, reflecting the country's religious and architectural legacies – Sunni, Shii, and Druze Muslims; Maronite, Eastern Orthodox, and other Christians; and many others. Regionally, each part of the countryside has its own local flavor, with different villages preserving a different culinary, artistic, religious, or cultural traditions.

## Fun Food

### >Mezzes

Lebanese hors d'oeuvres, or mezzes, are the savory beginning to a traditional meal and typically include hummus (garbanzo bean), baba ghanoush (eggplant), tabbouleh (parsley and cracked wheat salad), stuffed grape leaves, fatayer (triangular pastries stuffed with meat or spinach), and lebneh (yogurt dip with garlic). Hot pita bread, small bowls of olive oil, and fresh herbs accompany these dips and salads.

### >Main Dishes

Main dishes follow and could include any or all of the following: kibbeh (minced lamb, bulgur wheat, onions, pine nuts prepared in different ways), half of a chicken with rice, grilled chicken or lamb on skewers, or fish served with tahini sauce.

### >Desserts

Platters of fresh fruit and bowls of roasted pistachios or almonds cleanse the palate. Desserts are traditionally sweetened with honey, jam, dried fruits, or molasses, such as baklava (a phyllo dough pastry layered with honey or molasses and crushed pistachios) and maamoul (crunchy biscuits stuffed with nuts or dates).

## The Fun & Famous Are they Lebanese? Yes!

Candy Lightner, founder of Mothers Against Drunk Drivers (MADD)  
Paul Orfalea, founder of Kinko's  
John Mack, CEO of Morgan Stanley  
Yasmine Bleeth, actress  
Salma Hayek, Mexican-Lebanese actress  
Catherine Keener, actress  
Tony Shaloub, actor  
Danny and Marlo Thomas, actor/actress  
Paul Anka, singer/songwriter  
Emilio Estefan, producer (husband of Gloria Estefan)  
Tiny Tim, folk singer  
Wentworth Miller, actor (of *Prison Break* fame)