

The Landforms in Lebanon

by James Werning, Demand Media



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Lebanon's rich landforms are often overshadowed by its historical treasures, such as the Phoenician ruins of Tyre, Baalbek with its famed Roman temple or the medieval port city of Tripoli. Still, the country's landforms are splendid, from snow-capped peaks to pastoral river valleys and balmy Mediterranean shores. The main obstacle that tourists face is Lebanon's unstable political climate. Travelers are urged to heed U.S. Department of State travel warnings and hope for positive changes that will allow tourists to safely explore Lebanon's landforms in the future.

Lebanon Landforms

Lebanon is defined by four major land features running in parallel belts from north to south: the coastal strip, Lebanon Mountains, the Beqaa (or Bekaa) Valley and the Anti-Lebanon Mountains along the Syrian border. The etymological root of the name Lebanon is found in the ancient Semitic word laban, meaning "white," referring to the snow-capped mountains. Lebanon's highest peak, Qurnat as Sawda' at 10,131 feet, can be reached by a short drive from Tripoli, then a four- to five-hour hike. The mountain peaks are rugged and rocky, skirted with green meadows and sparse forests containing few of the cedars for which Lebanon was once renowned. The inland mountains descend sharply into the heavily farmed Beqaa Valley. This unique valley, formed by plate tectonics, is actually the northernmost extension of the Jordan Rift Valley, stretching south through the Dead Sea Valley all the way to the Red Sea. The Mediterranean coast is perhaps Lebanon's most popular landform, famed for its sandy beaches and unparalleled historical sites.

The Interplay of Culture and Geography

Lebanon's east-west link between Asian and Mediterranean cultures, coupled with the north-south flow of civilizations through its coastal strip and intermountain valley, caused it to be one of the most significant crossroads in all of history. Hittites, Phoenicians, Persians, Egyptians, Greeks, Ottomans, Jews, Arabs and more have left lasting imprints upon Lebanon. It is a melting pot of cultural and social diversity. While studying the landforms, don't neglect a look at the political, economic and religious movements that met, merged and fought at this strategic crossroads.

Ecotourism in Lebanon

Lebanon's Ecotourism Society (ikamalebanon.com) defines ecotourism as "responsible travel to natural areas which conserve the environment and improve the welfare of the local people." Prime ecotourism sites include the Shouf Cedars Nature Reserve, the Palm Islands Nature Reserve, Tyre Beach with its sea turtle breeding grounds and the Yammouneh Valley with its freshwater ecosystem. Travelers can enjoy the natural beauty of Lebanon's beaches, artesian springs, mountain forests, waterfalls and natural caves.

Travel Risks

Unfortunately, travelers are advised to avoid Lebanon at the time of publication. According to the U.S. Department of State (travel.state.gov), "Public demonstrations occur frequently with little warning and have the potential to become violent. ... The ability of U.S. government personnel to reach travelers or provide emergency services may at times be severely limited." The terrorist group Hezbollah is active in Lebanon, causing many safety concerns. The best that travelers can do is to keep monitoring the Department of State bulletins and hope for improvements that will allow safer travel to Lebanon in the days to come.

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- [Country-data.com: Lebanon Profile \(Including Geography\)](http://www.country-data.com/frd/cs/lbtoc.html#b0039)(<http://www.country-data.com/frd/cs/lbtoc.html#b0039>)
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- [U.S. Department of State: Lebanon Travel Warning](http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/tw_5578.html)(http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/tw_5578.html)

Resources

- [Lonelyplanet.com: Introducing Lebanon](#)
- [Skileb.com: Reach the Highest Summit](#)

About the Author

James Werning has authored books and numerous articles published on various websites. His scripts have aired for over 15 years on radio stations across the United States and Canada. He has a master's degree in communications from the University of Edinburgh, Scotland.

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