



THE FRAGILE DREAM OF LEBANON

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Beirut. Photographing the fireworks while sitting at the BIAF dinner, the Beirut International Awards Festivals.



A group of friends relaxing on the banks of Lake Chouwen, in the district of Jbeil.

Thirty years after the civil war, Lebanon is poised between economic crises and political instability

Thirty years ago Lebanon awoke from a nightmare. It was 1990 and the “Switzerland of the Middle East” was coming to grips with the results of a devastating civil war which had left 150,000 people dead and forced millions of Lebanese to leave their homeland.

In three decades the country has slowly risen, once again becoming a model of religious pluralism with a growing civil consciousness and (relatively) high levels of female emancipation: for the first time in an Arab country a female Ministry of the Interior has been elected, the Sunni Raya El Hassan.

Of course, today in Beirut corruption is rampant and – even with an expanding real-estate market (one only has to cast a glance at all the construction sites) – the economy remains stagnant and public debt is one of the highest in the world; in addition, the war in Syria has flooded the country with refugees and tensions with neighbouring states make the future rather precarious.



Ariz. At sunset the clouds rise along the picturesque valley of Qadisha, a deep gorge that, in the past, was a refuge for Maronite Christians persecuted by the Byzantines.



Beirut. Beirut Arab University (BAU), a dentistry student practicing with patients under the supervision of experienced teachers.



Beirut. At Raficel-Hariri Stadium young football teams training on Sunday morning (the goalie is a girl).

Lebanon – in 2020 will be a hundred years after the first declaration of the State of Greater Lebanon under the French Mandate – remains a “pot of clay” stuck between aggressive and intrusive powers. And yet the fragile “country of cedars” continues to live day-to-day, in a dream artificially inflated by foreign investment (above all, from the Gulf states) and billions of dollars in remittances from Lebanese living abroad (more than ten million people).

Society has learned to survive despite everything, nonchalantly shaking off conflicts and political crises. Fighting the ever-living trauma of civil war with ephemeral fun, ostentatious luxury, and cosmetic surgery that has become obsession. For those who can afford it, today more than ever, in Lebanon appearance is everything.



Beirut. Lebanese girls dancing at AHM, in the area of the waterfront.



Tripoli. A girl on a four-wheeler along the coast. Tripoli, 30 kilometres from the Syrian border, with a Muslim majority, is a city with a high concentration of Syrian refugees.



Beirut. A woman poses in front of a series of depictions of Lebanese personalities at the Sursock Museum of modern and contemporary art.



Beirut. A recent graduate being photographed with her family in Charles Debbas Park.



Ariz. The ski-lift at the foot of massive Mount Lebanon, an area filled with winter ski resorts.



Tiro. The shop of Samir Abu Hawash (in the back, on the right), 35-year-old tattoo artist, half Lebanese and half Palestinian. "It started as a job" – he says – "and now it's become a career, also because here in Lebanon tattoos are everywhere and they aren't prohibited".



Beirut. The entrance of Villa Audi, historical seat of the homonymous Lebanese bank that today houses a rich collection of ancient mosaics.



Tripoli. In the bazaar of the northern city, with a Muslim majority and a high rate of presence of Syrian refugees.



Beirut. Lebanese swimming among the rocks, not far from Raouche Rocks (also known as the Pigeon Rocks).



Batroun. Geovanna Sleiman and her friends celebrate her upcoming marriage in the courtyard of Saint Rafqa Institute Choir.



Beirut. A woman takes a picture of her husband and son at Luna Park, in the quartier of Manara.



Tripoli. A view of apartment blocks in the quarter of Jessrin.



Beirut. VIPs and technicians getting ready for the start of BIAF, the Beirut International Awards Festivals.



Tannourine. Lebanese tourists visiting the waterfalls of the Bala'a gorge sinkhole (also known as Bataara gorge waterfall).



Beirut. Tourists watching the dives during the Red Bull Cliff Diving World Series at Raouche Rocks (also known as Pigeon Rocks).



Beirut. Plastic surgeon Antoine Abi Abboud completes a filling for Jacqueline Milad, 55 years-old: in Lebanon, plastic surgery is very common.



Baalbek. A Lebanese tourist taking a photo of the remains of a lintel with a frieze underneath the Temple of Bacchus; the site is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.



Beirut. A view of Zaitunay Bay at sunset.



Tripoli. An end-of-the-year school party in the courtyard of a house in the district of Mina. Tripoli, 30 kilometres from the Syrian border, is overwhelmingly Muslim.



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