

CULTURE TRIP

Let us reacquaint you with this culture spot that's ideally placed for a mind-nourishing mini break

2 BEIRUT

Buzzing with creative energy, Beirut has earned its place on the culture map due to its lively art scene and historic sites. At the heart of it all, the soulful **Mar Mikhaël** neighbourhood is home to urban street art (notably **The Colourful Stairs** connecting to Jeitawi), independent galleries and lots of nightlife. Head to contemporary art hub **Galerie Tanit Beyrouth**, sister of the German gallery by the same name, to see the *The Towards the Sublime* exhibition running until 9 August. It's a showcase of ethereal pieces from Syrian-born artist Youssef Abdelke, among others. Also nearby, the homegrown gallery space and bookshop **Plan Bey** showcases a variety of prints and art books created by Lebanese artists, some of which are limited editions, which make great keepsakes. Later in the year, the 10th edition of the acclaimed **Beirut Art Fair** hits the city from 18-22 September.

For a bohemian feel, head to the neighbourhood of **Gemmayzeh**, known for its French colonial buildings, winding alleys and slew of hip eateries. You can taste traditional Lebanese flavours at local favourite **Bou Melhem** – try the smoked hummus and shrimp feta.

The Penthouse,
Phoenicia Beirut



DON'T LEAVE WITHOUT...
Taking a bus tour to Byblos to explore this ancient coastal town's ruins.
Roaming around the American University of Beirut campus, home to an Archaeological Museum and Natural History Museum.
Bopping away to Lebanese artists such as Elissa and Ziad Rahbani at the Beirut Holidays music festival (11-26 July).

A city of religious diversity, the **Mohammad Al-Amin Mosque** is a must see, with its blue domes and ornate ceilings. Just

a six-minute stroll away is the equally magnificent **Greek Orthodox Cathedral of Saint George**, which features restored detailed frescoes and a glass floor where you can view ruins of the Byzantine church. Ancient religious artefacts, such as a Byzantine-era tomb with Christian adornments from 440AD can be found on display at the **National Museum of Beirut**.

Gain a deeper insight into the modern-day city with a visit to **Downtown Beirut**, once coined 'the Paris of the Middle East' and rebuilt in recent years, there's both history and glamour aplenty here. Be sure to visit **Martyrs' Square**, a landmark tribute to the country's past.

In terms of where to stay, the five-star **Phoenicia Beirut** has a focus on art running throughout with an on-site gallery to check out. At the heart of Downtown, the sleek **Le Gray** offers stunning rooftop views while **Raouché Arjaan by Rotanna** is a sound choice for sea vistas.