

# WONDERS OF SYRIA

A JOURNEY THROUGH HISTORY & ARCHAEOLOGICAL LANDMARKS

PALMYRA, ALEPPO, DAMASCUS, BOSRA, KRAK DES CHEVALIERS,  
APAMEA, HAMA WATERWHEELS



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# KEY TO AMAZING SYRIA

Syria whose capital is Damascus covers an area of 185.180 sq. km. From the Euphrates to the Mediterranean, since Zenobia until Crusaders, there has been no inch of land in Syria that history and men have left untouched. A veritable open-air museum, with deserts and oases, blue beaches and valleys dotted with olive trees, the earth in this cradle of humanity is steeped in an Oriental perfume. A land of biblical tribes, Syria is home of the most beautiful legends where the sand has turned into stone.

Sumerians in the 5th century BC, Canaanites in the, 3rd century BC, then Amorites, Aramaeans, Hellenic, Seleucids, Romans, Byzantines and Arabs, pagans, then Christians and Muslims all met in this land.





# DAMASCUS



Damascus is the Capital of Syria, the oldest city in the world; many different civilizations have left traces in this ancient city.

The Ommeyyad Mosque, the largest in the world, is famous for its golden mosaics and the head of John the Baptist it contains. The Azem Palace is one of the most charming and luxurious residences in the Orient. The old souks, Saladin's Tomb and the National Museum are a must for anyone who visits Damascus.



Christians history finds its beginnings in Damascus. Saul of Tarsus (St. Paul) found the revelation on his way to Damascus, while going to arrest the Christians. He met St. Ananias there and preached the word of Christ with him.

A beautiful summer resort some 45 kilometers to the north of Damascus like Bloudan and Zabadani.



Not far from Damascus to the North around 30 Km. is marvelous town of Seidnaya - the meaning of the name is Seyda Naya ("Our Lady, Notre Dame" in Syriac).

Its convent has been famous throughout the Christian East, which was built in the year 574 A.D.



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### Ma'aloula

Ma'aloula is also a must-to-see town for its famous mountain crack, Al Faj; Malouleans still speak Aramaic, the language of Jesus Christ. In Maalloula there is Also the convent of Saint Takla the first female martyr in Christianity

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To the South of Damascus are the famous cities of:

**Darra:** The origin of the name is a Canaanite word mentioned by the Pharaoh Thutmose III (1490-1436) B.C. in his hieroglyphic tablets as "Athara'a". It was mentioned also in the Old Testament as "Idra'ai"



**Bosra:** with its famous Roman Theater that dates back to the 2nd century.



**Shahba:** Or Philipopolis the birthplace of the Syrian-born Emperor Philip who ruled Rome. For that the city has been named after him



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# ALEPPO

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360 km. to the north of Damascus. It is one of the famous ancient cities in the world, Famous for its Citadel that towers over it. A truly charming oriental city. Aleppo is the city of Architecture. Aleppo dominated the trade routes connecting East and West. Today, this second largest Syrian city still plays a key economic role. One can find various styles in it; architectures of the XIIIth and XIVth centuries, like the caravanserais, coranic schools and Hammams (so called Turkish baths), in the old city.

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You can even find, Eight kilometers long, the souks of Aleppo are certainly the biggest and the most charming in the Middle East. They have preserved their picturesque old divisions into specialized markets (of souks), jewelry souk, spices souk, carpet souk. Shopping becomes a stroll in the romantic Orient.



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# LATAKIA

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(186 km southwest of Aleppo). Latakia was one of the five cities built by Saluqos Nikator in the second century B.C. He named it after his mother, Laudetia. Not many ancient remains have survived in Latakia, but there are four columns and a Roman arch from the time of Septimus Severus (200 A.D.), in addition to a beautiful Ottoman construction called "Khan al-Dukhan", which is now a museum.

Latakia is the sea-gate to Syria. It is well provided with accommodation, and is well placed as a base from which to explore the coastal regions of the country. There are beaches, mountains, archaeological sites and many relics of the Crusaders, all within a few hours from each other





**Ras Shamra** : 16 kms to the north of Latakia.

It is the site of Ugarit, the kingdom that had a golden past in administration, education, diplomacy, law, religion and economics between the 16th and 13th centuries B.C. It is the kingdom that gave humanity the first alphabet in the world. This alphabet is still preserved on a clay tablet at the National Museum in Damascus.

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**Slenfah**: 50 kms east of Latakia and 1200 ms above sea level. It has a spectacular scenery and lovely weather. 65 kms north the Latakia, located on the Aqra' mountain amongst woods and thickets, 800 ms above sea level. The road leading to it from Latakia is one of the most beautiful in Syria. It runs through woods and meadows of wild flowers and groves of olive and pine, orchards of apple trees leading to the beautiful forest of Frulloq.

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**Ras al-Bassit**: Located on the northern part of the Syrian shore, about 40 kms to the north of Latakia, it is one of the most beautiful spots on the Mediterranean: a wide bay, with clear water and clean sand, Surrounded by mountains and green hills. Chalets, camping sites and restaurants along the shore make Ras Al-Bassit all the most attractive to visitors.

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**Salah al-Din Citadel**: Due to the importance of its position, this castle has been exploited before the crusaders, nevertheless it was described as the most impregnable crusader fortress. It stands on a rocky spur whose vertical walls rise above the junction of two fast flowing streams. It was completely isolated from the plateau by a deep ditch dug right through the connection neck of land. Today there is a drawbridge and a road which provide easy access to the foot of this "eagle's nest".



# HOMS

Homs is the third most important city in Syria. It lies 160km to the north of Damascus. Homs was an Arab emirate in the 2nd century B.C. It was also the third station on the "Silk route" after Doura Europos and Palmyra. It still retains this position of importance today, as the oil pipelines pass through the city. There remains only one citadel in the south of the city with its Damascus and Palmyra gates.

This historical city produced many impressive personalities. Bassianos (an emir of Homs), through his daughter's marriage to the Roman emperor, Septimius Severus, who ruled Rome from 193 to 211, sired three rulers, Caracalla, Heliogabalus and Alexander Severus. The city was the birthplace of the famous Syrian philosopher, Longinus, Counsellor to Queen Zenobia, and of the famous physician, Marlian.

Among the most significant historic constructions remaining in Homs is the mosque of Khaled ibn al-Walid, the great commander of the Muslim Arab armies. Two very tall white-stone minarets lend lightness to the imposing structure. The slender colonnade in black and white stone in horizontal rows is representative of traditional Syrian architecture



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Many churches still stand in Homs from the days of early Christianity in Syria. One of these churches is said to possess the girdle of the Blessed Virgin. The church of St. Elian is unique for its collection of fine frescoes discovered in 1970. These bear inscriptions in Greek and Arabic, and date back to the end of the 12th century. The Nuri mosque also dates back to the 12th century, distinguished for its beautiful entrance.

In the Homs museum, there are many archaeological artifacts dating back to the ancient Syrian, Greek, Roman, Byzantine and Arab eras.

The Qattina lake is 15km from Homs, it is rich in fish, and has the first rainwater dam used in agriculture which dates back to the 2nd millennium B.C. Close to this lake is the archaeological hill called Tel al-Nabi Mand (Qadesh), where a historic battle took place between the Hittites and the Egyptians in the thirteenth century B.C





# PALMYRA

The bride of the desert, A two thousand years, old city and crossroad in the middle of the Syrian desert, Palmyra has been famous ever since of its female monarch, Queen Zenobia. who had challenged the Roman emperor Aurlian and dominated lands East of the Mediterranean and Egypt for six years.

The ruins of Palmyra give an idea of the important role this city played at its height; collecting taxes and defending the Eastern border of the Roman Empire from the Persians. The colonnades, the temples devoted to Bel and Baalshamin, the funeral towers and the Necropolis valley are all definitely worth a visit.

Palmyra stands aside on oasis of palm trees. It offers a dramatic spectacle you will never see elsewhere. A dead piece of earth waiting to be submerged by the sands. And a medieval fortress on top of a hill, gloomy under an infinite blue sky. And at last, a skeleton of a city whitened by a ruthless sun, reminder of a great kingdom that once dominated the Orient, and is now dead.

The sunset of Palmyra is almost unreal. The shadows of the ruins seem to revive the old city every evening. Then this city disappears again in the desert night, clear and strangely calm.

Many activities are possible in Palmyra, ranging from a poolside cocktail, very impressive in the starry nights of Palmyra, to a Bedouin dinner in the desert or a stroll on camels or horses. Excursions to the Palaces of the desert can be arranged, departing from Palmyra. As for Damascus and Aleppo, special Themes parties, cocktail and dinner parties can be arranged



# HAMA

The city is 200km to the north of Damascus and 60km to the east of Banyas. It is a very ancient city, which has flourished continually since ancient times, and has known the successive civilizations of the Fertile Crescent. Hama has a long heroic history in defending Syria against foreign invasions. One of the outstanding battles was that of Qarqar, where the Assyrian army was defeated in 853 B.C. Unfortunately, few of its ancient relics have been preserved. However, Hama is well known for its enormous waterwheels ('noriahs') on the Orontes, which are as old as Hama itself. One of Hama's ancient buildings is al-Jami' al-Kabir (the Great Mosque), which dates back to the 14th century and includes two tombs of two emirs who ruled Hama in the 13th century. Another mosque is that of Abu al-Fida, named after Hama's Sultan, who was a famous Arab geographer and historian. The city is often linked with his name. A third ancient mosque is the al-Nuri mosque, which was built in the days of Nouredin al-Zanki in 1129; on its wall appear inscriptions in both Arabic and Greek



## BANYAS

Banyas: This city is located on the Syrian coast, 55 km to the south of Latakia. It was an ancient Phoenician seaport. The Greeks called it Balemia. It was famous for its orchards and its export of wood. Today it is better known for its oil refinery. On one of hills is the imposing al-Marqab Citadel, a huge fortress of black basalt stone.



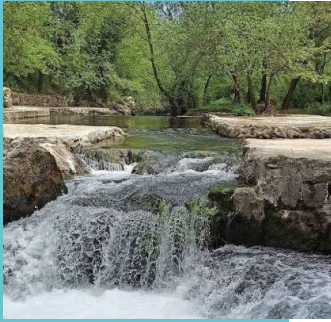
## TARTUS

Tartus: (To the south of Latakia). It was called "Antaradus" by the Phoenicians. The second most important Syrian seaport on the Mediterranean. It was held by the Templars but recovered by Saladin in 1188.



## ARWAD

Arwad: This is the only island in Syria, and it is located 3 kms from Tartus. It was an independent kingdom named Aradus in the days of Canaanites. It was often mentioned in inscriptions because of its importance in commerce and seafaring. Arwad is a beautiful small island, with a mass of houses and fortresses with narrow lanes. It has many cafes and restaurants overlooking Tartus and the sea. Its ancient citadel was used as a prison for the nationalists during the resistance against the French. The walls of some cells in this citadel are still covered with the writings of the nationalists.



## DRAYKISH

Draykish: A lovely town, 29 kms from Tartus, situated on a mountain covered with olive trees

## SAFITA

Safita: 10 kms south of Draykish, 35 kms east of Tartus and 380 ms above sea - level, Safita is surrounded by hills covered with olive trees and flowers on all sides. The present-day town with its tiles roofs stands on the site of the fortress that was called Castle le Blanc by the crusaders. One of its huge towers, about 38 ms high is still standing; this tower contains a chapel, which has never been deconsecrated: Christians still hold their services in it.



## QAL'AT AL-HOSN

Qal'at al-Hosn (Crac des Chevaliers): The most famous medieval citadel in the world, Qal'at al-Hosn is 65km west of Homs and 75 southeast of Tartus. It is 650m above sea level. It was built in order to control the so-called 'Homs Gap', the gateway to Syria. It was through this passage that Syria communicated with the Mediterranean. In ancient times the importance of the strategic corridor was immense. It was of crucial importance to the Crusaders and other foreign invaders in their conquest of the coast





## HOSN SLEIMAN

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Hosn Sleiman: 25 kms from Safita; 14 kms beyond Draykish, in the direction of Misyaf, "Hosn Sleiman" is the Arabic name for the site of ancient Bactocece; it was here, in the heart of these wild mountains cut through by ravines, that the inhabitants of Aradus (the present Isle of Arwad) once built a temple dedicated to Baal and Astrate. Today Qal'aat al-Arima (15 kms southwest of Safita), once a forward strong point for castle le Blanc and for the Crac, it still has two towers dating back to the 12th and 13th centuries



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## MASHTA AL-HELU

Mashta al-Helu: Located northeast of Safita, it is the largest in a group of small villages scattered on the green hills, where the weather is cool even on the hottest summer days. The most attractive among these white stone villages is al-Kafroon (3kms from Mashta al-Helu). It is located at the foot of a small hill, completely covered with oak trees and surrounded by mountains with many churches and mosques. Also worth visiting is Mar Elias, a cave- like church in the north of the village. An international hotel resort, in addition to in the apple orchards along the streams that run through it.





## AL-MARQAB CITADEL

Al-Marqab Citadel: This citadel is only 6 kms southeast of Banyas, and is 500 ms above sea level. It is enormous: there are not less than fourteen square and round towers jutting from the curtain wall that encircles the hilltop to form a triangular bastion. Its southern corner, sharper than the others and bristling with defences, has a keep rising above it like the prow of a ship. What makes it particularly glowering is the black basalt stone with which it was built. This citadel could accommodate 1000 people, in addition to the garrison, along with provisions to last them for five years.

# IDLIB

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## Idlib: A Tapestry of Heritage and Resilience

Nestled in the heart of Northwest Syria, Idlib stands as a profound testament to the enduring spirit of human civilization. Historically known as the "Green Province" due to its sprawling olive groves and fertile landscapes, Idlib offers a sophisticated blend of archaeological grandeur and natural serenity, making it a compelling destination for those seeking depth and authenticity.





## EBLA

Ebla (Tell Mardikh): The Archive of the Bronze Age  
Dating back to the 3rd millennium BCE, Ebla is one of the most vital archaeological landmarks in the Near East. Once a dominant economic and political superpower, the site is globally renowned for the discovery of its Royal Palace G and a vast archive of over 17,000 cuneiform clay tablets



## SERJILLA

Serjilla: The Ghost of Byzantine Prosperity  
As one of the most exceptionally preserved "Dead Cities" of the Limestone Massif, Serjilla offers a hauntingly beautiful, frozen-in-time window into late antiquity (4th–7th centuries CE). Nestled in a natural basin, this UNESCO World Heritage site is famous for its highly intact domestic and community structures



## AL-BARA

The Monumental Limestone Metropolis  
Pyramidal tombs amidst the olive groves of Al-Bara, Sprawling over several square kilometers, Al-Bara is the largest of the ancient abandoned settlements in Northwest Syria. During the Byzantine era, it was a thriving center for wine and olive oil production, which is still evident from the massive stone olive presses scattered across the site



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# SUGGESTED TOURS Syria



/Package 5 Nights/ 6 days

Day 1: Arrival at Damascus airport, meet and assist, transfer to Hotel overnight.

Day 2: Full day city Tour of Damascus / Umayyad Mosque/Salaheddin Tomb/Al Azem Palace/Biblical sites/Saint Hanania & Saint Paul Churches / Hammidah old covered bazaar / National Museum/Straight Street and Tatic Sleimanich. Transfer to hotel, overnight.

Day 3: Full day visit of Aleppo/Umayyad Mosque/ Khan Al Wazir/Church of the 40 Armenian martyrs and the Greatest Citadel of Aleppo. Transfer to hotel, overnight.

Day 4 : Full day visit of Idlib These "Dead Cities," such as Bara and Serjilla, offer an immersive journey into Byzantine life.

Day 5: Return to Damascus via Saint Simeon. free afternoon for shopping and relaxation departure to Damascus airport.

Day 6: Departure back to the country of origin.

# SUGESTED TOURS Syria



Syria / Package 9 Nights / 10 Days

Day 1: Arrival at Damascus Airport, meet and assist, transfer to hotel, overnight in Damascus.

Day 2: Full-day city tour of Damascus, visit to the Umayyad Mosque/ Salaheddin Tomb/ Al Azem Palace/Biblical sites/National Museum/Hammidiyya covered bazaar/Takie Sleimanich/Hanania and St. Paul churches/then a drive to the slope of Mount Kassioun overlooking Damascus to watch the sunset, then a transfer to hotel overnight in Damascus

Day 3: Departure to visit Seidnaya, a town where houses are built around a rock. Visit the Convent of Our Lady of Seidnaya, where the icon of the Virgin Mary is displayed. Then drive to the Convent of the Sherobim, situated on a hilltop overlooking the village of Seidnaya. Proceed to the village of Maaloula to visit the two monasteries of Saint Takla and Saint Sarkis. Continue to the central city of Homs, transfer to hotel, overnight in Homs.

Day 4: Departure to visit Tell Kalakh and Marmarita. Then drive to discover the Crac des Chevaliers, considered one of the greatest castles in the world and a model of perfection in medieval fortification. Afternoon drive to Tartous via Al Markab Castle, then to Latakia, transfer to hotel, overnight in Latakia

Day 5: Proceed to visit Salaheddin Castle, then Ugarit. Drive to Afamia to discover the Colonnade/Cathedral and Philosophical School. Continue to Aleppo, the second largest city in Syria. Arrive in Aleppo. Transfer to hotel. Overnight in Aleppo.

Day 6: Full-day city tour of Aleppo, including the Umayyad Mosque, the old covered bazaar, Khan Al Wazir, and the Church of the 40 Armenian Martyrs. In the afternoon, discover the famous fortress of Aleppo. Transfer to hotel. Overnight in Aleppo.

Day 7: Departure to visit Saint Simeon the Stylist and the Church of Kalb Lozeh, considered the oldest church on earth. Free afternoon for shopping. Overnight in Aleppo

Day 8: Continue visiting Palmyra: the Agora, the tombs of different types, the Hypogeum of the Three Brothers, and the Museum. Then proceed to Damascus, transfer to your hotel, and stay overnight in Damascus

Day 9: Return to Damascus. Free day for leisure and overnight shopping in Damascus.

Day 10: Transfer to Damascus airport for final departure.

# SUGESTED TOURS Syria ●●●

## Syria/Jordan (8 Nights/9 Days)

Day 1: Arrival at Damascus Airport, meet and assist, transfer to hotel. Afternoon visit to the Umayyad Mosque and Al Azem Palace. Overnight in Damascus.

Day 2: Continue visiting Damascus/Al Hamidiyeh covered bazaar, National Museum/Takie Sleimanieh/Straight Street/St. Hanania and St. Paul churches. Free afternoon for shopping. Transfer to hotel. Overnight in Damascus

Day 3: Drive to Seidnaya, a town where houses are built around a rock. Visit the Convent of Our Lady of Seidnaya, where an icon of the Virgin Mary is displayed. Then continue to Maaloula to visit the monasteries of Saint Takla and Sarkis.

Day 4: Full-day visit to the city, including the Umayyad Mosque, the old covered bazaar, Khan al-Wazir, and the famous fortress of Aleppo. Transfer to hotel, and overnight in Aleppo.

Day 5: Continue visiting Aleppo; proceed back to Damascus, transfer to hotel, and

overnight in Damascus. Day 6: Early transfer to Amman, visit the city, and overnight.

Day 7: Full-day city tour of Petra with horseback riding, transfer to hotel, and overnight

Day 8: Departure for a full-day city tour of Aqaba, visit to Wadi Rum, and enjoy swimming and diving in Aqaba. Transfer to hotel, overnight.

Day 9: Final departure and end of services

# SUGESTED TOURS Syria



Syria / Lebanon (8 Nights / 9 Days)

Day 1: Arrival at Damascus Airport, meet and assist, transfer to hotel.

Afternoon visit to the Umayyad Mosque and Al Azem Palace. Overnight in Damascus.

Day 2: Continue visiting Damascus: Al Hamidiah covered bazaar, National Museum, Takie Sleimanich, Straight Street, St. Hanania and St. Paul churches. Free afternoon for shopping. Transfer to hotel. Overnight in Damascus.

Day 3: Drive to Seidnaya, a town where houses are built around a rock. Visit the Convent of Our Lady of Seidnaya, where an icon of the Virgin Mary is displayed. Then continue to Maaloula to visit two monasteries of Saint Takla and Saint Sarkis.

Day 4: Full-day visit to the city, including the Umayyad Mosque, the old Covered Bazaar, Khan Al Wazir, and the famous fortress of Aleppo. Transfer to hotel, overnight stay in Aleppo.

Day 5: Continue visiting Aleppo; proceed back to Damascus. Transfer to hotel, overnight stay in Damascus.

Day 6: Early transfer to Beirut, visit the city and Hamra shopping center, overnight stay.

Day 7: Full-day city tour of Jounieh and Tripoli, the northern city of Lebanon. Return to Jounieh and overnight stay.

Day 8: Departure for a full-day city tour of Sidon and Tyre. Return to Beirut and overnight stay.

Day 9: Final departure and end of services

# SUGESTED TOURS Syria



## Full Day Tours in Syria

### Seidnaya & Maaloula

Full day visit of Seidnaya and Maaloula to discover the Convent of Our Lady of Seidnaya, where the icon of the Virgin Mary is displayed. Then departure to Maaloula to visit the two monasteries of Saint Takla and Saint Sarkis, before returning to Damascus.

### Damascus

Full day city tour of Damascus: Umayyad Mosque, Salaheddin Tomb, Al-Azem Palace, biblical sites, Saint Hanania & Saint Paul Churches, Hammidiyeh old covered bazaar, National Museum, Straight Street and Takie Sleimanich. Transfer to hotel, overnight in Damascus





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Lattakia: 8th of March Street, Dental Association Building, 3rd floor

Tartous: Military Police Roundabout, above Al-Azzam Sweets, 5th floor

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