



KORYO TOURS

Travel Syria's Historic Lands

Beirut to Damascus, Aleppo,
Palmyra, Homs, Hama, Maloula,
Lattakia, Bosra, and more!

9 nights in Syria + 2 nights in Beirut (4 & 5 hotels)*





INTRODUCTION

If you've ever dreamed of exploring one of the world's oldest civilisations, walking through streets that have witnessed millennia of history, and sharing warm meals with locals who embody the spirit of resilience, then this journey through Syria is for you, as Koryo Tours travels to Syria! Probably one of **the most underrated countries** to travel to in the world.

Over 12 days, we'll travel from bustling **Beirut** to **Damascus**, **Aleppo**, **Palmyra**, and **beyond** - as you visit the homes of locals, take part in cooking classes, explore ancient wonders and medieval castles on foot, stay in incredible traditional hotels, and end the day relaxing in Syria's only speakeasy...

Our adventure begins in **Damascus**, one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities on Earth, and our exploration takes us from the underground **Ananias Church** to the **Roman Straight Street**, to sipping tea in **Al Nofara** (the city's oldest café) and listening to the legendary storyteller who still performs there.

Heading north, we pass through **Maaloula**, where the ancient Aramaic language still lives on, and visit its breathtaking **Mar Musa Monastery**, perched high in the mountains. In **Hama**, the great waterwheels turn as they have for centuries, before our tour to Syria arrives in **Aleppo**.

Once the rival of Damascus as the oldest continuously inhabited city, **Aleppo** is full of contrasts: historic **citadels**, restored **markets**, and the poignant scars of war. Highlights here include visiting the traditional **Aleppo Soap** factories (home to the world's largest soap!), and watching the sunset from a secret lookout before feasting on falafel, said to be the best in the world.

Our Syria tour then takes us west toward the coast to **Lattakia**. Along the way, we'll stop at the mighty **Citadel of Salah ad-Din**, before continuing to **Burj Islam's** rocky beaches. We also visit the ancient ruins of **Ugarit** (where the world's first alphabet was discovered) and the mighty Crusader stronghold of **Marqab Castle**.

We then make a stop at **Tartous** and Syria's only island - **Arwad Island**.

Of course, no tour to Syria would be complete without **Krak des Chevaliers**, described by Lawrence of Arabia as "*the most wholly admirable castle in the world.*" In **Homs**, where we'll see both Islamic and Christian landmarks and experience the resilience of a city that has endured so much.

And saving perhaps the most iconic site of all to last - **Palmyra**. Once a key Silk Road site and home to Queen Zenobia's short-lived empire. Unfortunately, it was largely destroyed by ISIS, but there is still plenty to explore. We wander through its great **colonnades**, **amphitheatre**, and **temples**. And round it all off by enjoying lunch in a **Bedouin** tent restaurant, hosted by a local family.

Our tour to Syria ends with a visit to **Bosra al-Sham**, home to the world's best-preserved Roman theatre.



HIGHLIGHTS

- **Palmyra** | The ancient city and Roman Ruins.
- **Krak Des Chevaliers** | One of the most important preserved medieval castles in the world from the 11th Century, where we explore its towers and chambers.
- **Damascus & Aleppo** | The Old Town of Damascus, the Umayyad Mosque, the bustling Souk al-Hamidiye, the exquisite Azem Palace... and explore Syria's second largest city of Aleppo including the famous citadel.

INCLUSIONS

- Return transportation from Beirut to Damascus.
- 2 nights hotel in Beirut before & after the tour in Syria.
- All transportation within Syria (AC bus).
- Entrance fees for all sites mentioned in the itinerary.
- Accommodation every night (4 & 5* hotels, 1x 3* hotel).
- Local tour guide
- Koryo Tours tour leader
- All meals listed (including homemade dinner with a Syrian family + private Arada Show)
- One 1.5-L bottle of water per day.
- Permits and all local taxes
- Syrian land border departure tax

EXCLUSIONS

- Travel to Beirut.
- Visa fee.
- Personal expenses such as souvenirs or any optional activities.
- Extra drinks/snacks at meal times.
- Tipping for the guide and driver

NOTES

- All items on this itinerary are subject to change or cancellation depending on the security situation and availability. Koryo Tours takes safety on our tours extremely seriously and it will be prioritised above all else.
- Visa will be visa on arrival at the border. Prices range depending on nationality from around 80 USD - 200 USD.



ITINERARY

Briefing Day | February 20 | Friday

Briefing Night in Beirut

Arrival in Beirut

- Arrive at Beirut-Rafic Hariri International Airport (BEY) throughout the day. Beirut is served by major European, Middle Eastern carriers, and the local airline MEA-Middle East Airlines from various destinations, well-connected with the rest of the world.

Welcome Dinner

- Welcome Dinner & Pre-Tour Briefing
- We will gather for some excellent Lebanese food and a pre-tour briefing tonight before the adventure ahead.

Accommodation | Crowne Plaza Hotel, 5* hotel located in Central Hamra, Beirut

Included Meals | N/A

DAY 1 | February 21 | Saturday

Into Syria

Beirut to Damascus Scenic Drive

- We will leave early from the Lebanese capital on a scenic drive to the Syrian border, and onward to Damascus. This is a ca. 4-hour-long drive, including formalities at the Lebanon-Syria border.
- Check in and a short recharge at our hotel in Damascus.

The Historic Old Town of Damascus

- **Ananias Church** | The oldest underground structure of Damascus and the presumed remains of Ananias of Damascus' home, where Saul was baptised, who is known today as Paul the Apostle.
- **Straight Street** | Also known by its Latin name, Via Recta, is the Roman street that runs from East to West in Damascus' Old Town. The street has several sites dating back to the Roman, Christian, and Islamic periods, and according to the Book of Acts, St. Paul also visited here.



- **Al Nofara** | The oldest café in Damascus, where we will listen to the famous storyteller.
- Dinner will be at Naerj, the best restaurant in Damascus Old Town, where you are guaranteed to have one of the best meals of your life.
- Optional evening scrub at a historic Hamam.

Accommodation | Mamluka Hotel 5* or similar, Damascus.

Included Meals | Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 2 | February 22 | Sunday

Damascus City Tour

Day in Damascus

- **National Museum** | Here, we will gain an overview of the civilisations that have thrived on Syrian soil. It exhibits statues, seals, jewellery, masks, mosaics, tablets, and weavings from the most important sites in the country.
- **Handicraft Market** | Home to some of the finest handmade goods in the Middle East.
- **Souk Al-Hamidiye** | The most beautiful souk of Damascus. Its shops display a wide range of goods, including clothes, fabrics, pastries, and handicrafts.
- **Umayyad Mosque** | A historic site of worship, dating back to the first millennium BCE, it was once a church and is now one of the most important mosques in the World.
- **Azem Palace** | A beautifully preserved example of a traditional Damascene house turned Ottoman-era museum.
- **Ghouta Area** | A site of chemical weapons attack by the Assad regime, a poignant reminder of the region's history and the resilience of its people.
- **Mount Qasioun** | The highest peak in Damascus, offering a breathtaking panoramic view of the entire city. We will also discover some hidden gems in the city, such as Al Qashleh Café, known for its vibrant atmosphere and popularity with Syria's younger crowd.
- **Speakeasy** | Additionally, we will stop by The Barber Shop, the only speakeasy place in Syria, offering a truly one-of-a-kind experience.



Accommodation | Mamluka Hotel 5* or similar, Damascus

Included Meals | Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 3 | February 23 | Monday

Damascus to Aleppo

Maaloula

- The first stop on the route to Aleppo will be **Maaloula**, a small Christian town that suffered immense destruction by ISIS in 2014. Despite this, it remains one of the most scenic villages in Syria and is the only place in the world where Aramaic, the language spoken by Jesus, is still actively used as a living language.

Mar Musa

- Our second stop along the road will be **Mar Musa**, a breathtaking 6th-century monastery perched among rugged mountains.
- Shaped like a towering fortress, this ancient site was founded by Mar Musa al-Habashi (Saint Moses of Abyssinia), who, according to legend, was the son of an Ethiopian king.

Hama

- Our last stop before reaching Aleppo will be **Hama**, where we'll visit the iconic waterwheels that once played a crucial role in providing water to the surrounding land. These ancient structures are a symbol of the city's rich history.

Aleppo

- **Aleppo** has been a flourishing metropolis since the 3rd millennium BCE. The city has been fighting with Damascus for the title of *the world's oldest continuously inhabited city*.
- After some exploring of the city, we'll enjoy dinner at **Qurtuba**, a renowned Syrian restaurant run by an Armenian family, known for its authentic flavours and warm atmosphere.

Accommodation | Rigga Hotel 4* or similar, Aleppo

Included Meals | Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 4 | February 24 | Tuesday



Aleppo

- **Aleppo Castle** | Located in the middle of the city, the castle dominates Aleppo from a height of fifty meters. Its admirably designed towers, along with its iron gates, are distinguished by their entrances made with perfection to prevent any enemy intrusion.
- **Aleppo Market** | Stretching from the front of the castle to the old city, we'll witness the contrast between the destroyed areas, the active restoration sites, and the fully renovated section, which now looks stunning.
- **Abu Hagoub Restaurant** | As Aleppo is renowned for its spicy sausage, we will have lunch at this famous restaurant to sample the best sausage sandwiches in the city.
- **Umayyad Mosque** | The largest and one of the oldest mosques in the city, which is currently in the final stages of restoration.
- **Al-Jubaili Soap Factory** | The oldest soap factory in Aleppo, where you'll have the opportunity to witness the traditional process of crafting the world-famous laurel Aleppo soap, renowned for its quality and history. We will also visit a soap exhibition where you can touch the largest bar of soap in the world, according to the Guinness World Records Book.
- For sunset, we will visit one of our secret spots overlooking Aleppo.

Accommodation | Rigga Hotel 4* or similar, Aleppo

Included Meals | Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 5 | February 25 | Wednesday

Aleppo to Lattakia

Idlib

- **Idlib Governorate** | Here, we can observe a unique economic system distinct from other regions, and we will also visit the refugee camps, gaining insight into the challenges faced by displaced families.

To Lattakia

- **Citadel of Salah ad-Din** | Syria's most breathtaking castle, majestically perched on a rocky hill, offering panoramic views of the surrounding green mountains. One of its most remarkable features is a manually excavated moat, a testament to the



dedication and skill of its builders.

- This historic fortress has witnessed the influence of multiple civilisations, from the Phoenicians and Byzantines to the Crusaders and the era of Saladin.
- **Lattakia** | This is where the sea meets the lush green mountains, and it has a lively urban atmosphere.
- Upon arrival, we will explore the city and take in its unique blend of natural beauty and vibrant culture.

Accommodation | la Mira Hotel 5*, Lattakia

Included Meals | Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 6 | February 26 | Thursday

Lattakia to Tartous

Baghdad City Tour

- **Burj Islam** | An area renowned for its stunning rocky beaches and crystal-clear blue waters. This picturesque coastal spot also features a breathtaking sea cave, offering a unique and serene natural escape.

Ugarit

- **Ugarit** | A historic coastal town north of Lattakia. Ugarit gained fame with the discovery of clay tablets bearing the world's oldest known consonantal alphabet.
- The earliest settlement, a large fortified village, dates back to the 8th millennium BCE. Later, two immense palaces were constructed, containing archives and literary texts that reveal an astonishing diversity of languages and five distinct writing systems, including the Ugaritic script from the 14th century BCE.
- **Marqab Castle** | Also known as Margat, a historic Crusader fortress near Baniyas.
- As one of the major strongholds of the Knights Hospitaller, who also controlled Krak des Chevaliers, the two castles communicated via smoke signals or mirrors through Chastel-Blanc (Safita), a smaller intermediary fortress. Perched on a hilltop, Marqab Castle offers breathtaking views of the coastline.

Tartous

- **Tartous** | A vibrant city that blends seamlessly with the sea.



- Tartous is renowned for its lively seafront, lined with dozens of cafés and restaurants offering stunning views and a relaxing ambience.

Accommodation | Shahin Tower Hotel 4*, Tartous

Included Meals | Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 7 | February 27 | Friday

Tartous to Homs

- **Arwad Island |** The only island in Syria. Known for its charming narrow alleys and small houses enclosed within ancient walls. Measuring approximately 800 meters in length and 500 meters in width, the Phoenicians settled the island in the early 2nd millennium BCE. Today, Arwad is renowned for its handmade shipbuilding and thriving fishing industry.
- **Amrit |** A Phoenician temple, located in Tartous Governorate, dating back to the 3rd millennium BCE.
- Its unique design features a central altar accessible only by boat, as it is surrounded by water within the temple grounds. The site reflects the grandeur of the Phoenician civilisation along the Syrian coast. Notably, an Olympic stadium is situated nearby.

Krak Des Chevaliers

- **Krak des Chevaliers |** This castle was described by Lawrence of Arabia as "the most wholly admirable castle in the world."
- In addition, this medieval crusader fortress is one of the most significant and well-preserved castles from that era, offering a fascinating glimpse into Syrian History.

Homs

- **Homs |** The most affected city by the war.
- During our visit, we'll explore the Khaled Ibn Al-Walid Shrine and the St. Mary Church of the Holy Belt, two significant landmarks of the city.

Accommodation | Al Walid Hotel 3* or similar, Homs (our only 3* hotel of the trip)

Included Meals | Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner



DAY 8 | February 28 | Saturday

Palmyra / Homs to Damascus

Palmyra

- Syria's most iconic tourist destination. Notably, once a key city on the Silk Road, **Palmyra** briefly ruled its own empire in the 3rd century, stretching from Turkey to Egypt.
- However, despite being well-preserved, much of the city was sadly destroyed during the ISIS occupation in 2015.
- During our tour, we will explore what remains, including the **Arch of Triumph**, **Fakhr ad-Din al-Maani Castle**, the **Sulphur Spring**, the **Great Columns**, the **Theatre**, the **Agora**, and the **Tombs**.
- We'll enjoy a delicious lunch in a traditional Bedouin tent restaurant, run by a local family. This is, indeed, a perfect opportunity to savour authentic Syrian cuisine while experiencing the warm hospitality of the region.

Return to Damascus

- We will drive back to Damascus, arriving just in time to enjoy a relaxing dinner in the city.

Accommodation | Mamluka Hotel 5* or similar, Damascus.

Included Meals | Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 9 | March 1 | Sunday

Busra Al Sham

- **Shrine of Sayyida Zaynab |** An important Mosque for Shiaa followers.
- **Bosra al-Sham |** We will drive south through the lush, fertile plains to this ancient city, home to the best-preserved Roman amphitheatre in the world. We'll explore the city's rich Roman heritage, including its baths and captivating historical tales.
- Meanwhile, while in the region, we'll also have the chance to enjoy the renowned Malihi dish, a local speciality.



- After returning to Damascus, we'll wrap up the journey with a memorable final night out.
- **Cooking Class** | Our last program for the day will be a cooking class and dinner with a Syrian family.

Accommodation | Mamluka Hotel 5* or similar, Damascus.

Included Meals | Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 10 | March 2 | Monday

Beirut

- In the morning, we will cover the remaining attractions in Damascus that might have been left out during the busy previous days.
- We will also have some time for some last-minute shopping.
- Drive back to Beirut. The estimated arrival time in Beirut is 18:00.

Accommodation | Crowne Plaza Hotel, 5* hotel located in Central Hamra, Beirut

Included Meals | Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 11 | March 3 | Tuesday

Departure from Beirut

Flight Departures from Beirut Airport

- Departure from **Beirut-Rafic Hariri International Airport** (BEY) throughout the day to European or Middle Eastern destinations offering connection to the rest of the World.

Included Meals | Breakfast