

itinerary 7-1 :: Hamat

Hamat derives its name from the Phoenician language, meaning "fever." Hamat's historical sites and churches are primarily Christian, although one site Saydet Al-Nouriyeh (a convent originally built in 300 A.D.) attracts pilgrims from all religions. There are many public beaches with water sport facilities in the Hannoush region, west of Hamat.

Mussaylha Fort to Hamat: 3.8km

- From Mussaylha Fort, return to the highway and continue driving north.
- Continue on the highway for approximately 2.6km, and then turn left, crossing over a bridge. (During the 2.6km, you will pass landmarks such as an Arabic/English sign for Florida Beach, a tunnel, and an Arabic sign for Hamat-Deir Saydet Al-Nouriyeh.) After you cross the bridge, you will see Florida Beach on the left and later Rocca Marina in the distance on the right.





MONUMENT OF THE CHIKKA BYPASS

In the area of "Bawb Al-Hawa," stands a historical statue dating from 1943. The statue was established by the ninth army engineers of the British forces as a commemoration for building the road that links the town of Hamat to the coast within 100 days.



Driving Directions

Drive for 1.7km. On the left side of the road you will see the Chikka Bypass Monument.



OUR LADY OF THE LIGHT CONVENT (DEIR SAYDET AL-NOURRIYYEH / AL-NOURIEH)

Built in 1880 on northern part of the Ras ech-Chaqa'a promontory, Our Lady of the Light Convent, or Saydet Al-Nouriyeh began its history as a small chapel built in a cave to commemorate a miracle. Behind the present convent are rough stone steps leading down to this spot. The original convent, built in 300 A.D., was situated at the bottom of the mountain under the present convent; of this, only a rock-carved church (called St. Michael's or Mar Mikhael) remains. On the right side in the internal yard of the convent, you can see the beautiful old church. On the left side of the convent entrance, there is a beautiful garden with a statue on which a large icon is placed. The old buildings are being renovated. From the convent, there is a superb view of the town of Heri, its bay, and sandy beaches, stretching as far as Enfé and Tripoli. Saydet Al-Nouriyeh is considered a major attraction for pilgrims and believers from all sects and religion from Lebanon and neighboring countries.



Driving Directions

From the Chikka Bypass Monument, drive straight ahead for 160m. On the right side of the road you will see an Arabic/French sign for Hamat. Drive another 100m and turn right, following the sign. Drive for 2.7km, passing an olive press (on the left), old houses, the St. Rita Human Development Institute (on the right), olive groves and oak trees, and, finally, you will see the entrance to Saydet Al-Nouriyeh on the right side of the road. There is a parking area and a snack shop.



SAYDET AL-HERCHIEH CHURCH

The Saydet Al-Herchieh Church is carved into the rock. On the left side of the church, there is a cave to light candles and near it an oak tree with ribbons. The age of the church is not known.



Driving Directions

From Saydet Al-Nouriyeh, continue driving straight ahead on the same road for 2km, and then turn right across from a snack shop. Drive 2km, and you will see a large cross, indicating that you have reached the Saydet Al-Herchieh Church. Go down the stairs to enter the church.



LADY NIYAH PARISH CHURCH (SAYDET AL-NIYAH)

Dating to 1152, Saydet Al-Niyah Church was restored and expanded in 1890. The church has a remarkable dome and a beautiful arched staircase.



Driving Directions

From Saydet Al-Herchieh, drive back 2km to the main road and turn right to continue driving in the same direction as before. Drive 0.9km to reach a vegetable shop in the town square. From the town square, drive straight ahead for 200m, and then continue straight following the Arabic sign pointing towards St. Elias Church (Mar Elias). You will pass between houses and, after 0.3km, you will reach a crossroads. Turn left here, drive 200m, and you will reach Saydet Al-Niyah Church. (If you continue straight ahead, you would reach St. Elias Monastery.)



ST. ELIAS MONASTERY (DEIR MAR ELIAS)

Overlooking the Nahr El-Jaouz river valley and Batroun city, Mar Elias Monastery was built over the rubble of a pagan temple in the first quarter of the 19th century. The monastery has a gate with a cross and a beautiful dome. From the monastery, you can view Mussaylha For and the mountain on one side, and on the other side you can see the sea.



Driving Directions

From Saydet Al-Niyah Church, drive back to the crossroads. Turn left, following the Arabic signs for Mar Elias Church; after 100m, turn right again. About 0.5km later, turn right to reach St. Elias Monastery.



ST. GEORGES MONASTERY (DEIR MAR GERGES)

Reconstructed between 1841 and 1870 over the debris of the old St. Dimitrius Monastery, Mar Gerges Monastery is situated on strategic place close to Hamat airport, overlooking the sea and the airfield. (In fact, because of its strategic location, for some time it served as a military base; after a recent renovation, it is now open to visitors.) One wall of old St. Dimitrius Monastery reportedly is still standing and is covered with colored paintings of Christ and the Virgin Mary. The precise history of the monastery is unknown.



Driving Directions

From St. Elias Monastery, retrace your path to the town square. From the square, go left down a road between pine trees. After 2km, you will reach a fork in the road with an old English/Arabic sign pointing left towards Mar Gerges Monastery; take the left fork and continue driving straight for 400m to reach the monastery.



BEACHES AT HANNOUSH

There are many beaches in the Hannoush area, including St. Antoine, St. Simon, St. Helen Green, Beny, Florida, Sandy, Nour, Blue, and Palmera Beaches. Most of these rocky beaches have water sport facilities, and there is also as a seaside resort and a private beach with two seafood restaurants.



Driving Directions

From St. George's Church, retrace your path to the old English/Arabic sign for Mar Gerges Monastery. At the sign, turn left and drive downwards for 1.2km. Turn right onto the main road, and drive for 3.4km (you will pass over a bridge and under a tunnel that bypasses Ras ech-Chaqa'a and Saydet Al Nouriyeh Convent). Then, on the left, you will see many beaches, including St. Antoine, St. Simon, St. Helen Green Beach, and Beny Beach. About 0.4km after you pass St. Antoine Beach, you will see Florida Beach on the left. Drive 0.8km further to reach Sandy Beach, then Nour Beach, and then Blue Beach (all on the left). About 400m after Blue Beach you will see the beginning of the cement plantation in Chikka. After another 1km, you will see Palmera Beach on the left, and on the right, you will see a French/Arabic welcome sign for Chikka.

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Where to EAT

Rocca Marine Restaurant

Traditional Lebanese food and seafood, located in Hamat. Tel: +961-(0)6-540070.

Where to STAY

Beaulieu Motel

Offers 22 chalets, located in Hamat. Prices: \$50-85. Tel: +961-(0)6-540649.