

## itinerary 9-G :: Harissa

Located on the mountain summit 600 meters above the Bay of Jounié, Harissa is the seat of the Papal Nuncio in Lebanon and is the most important site for religious pilgrims in Lebanon. Harissa is most famous for its large statue of the Virgin Mary, the Notre Dame du Liban, opened in 1908. There are about 20 churches and monasteries of several denominations in the area. The name of Harissa is derived from the Semite word "Hors," meaning "a sharp edge," which is a geographical description of the village.

### Ghosta to Harissa : 1km

- From Ghosta and the Monastery of Our Lady Nasser, continue driving straight ahead. On the left you will see pine trees and a snack shop.
- After 0.5km, you will reach an Arabic sign welcoming you to Harissa. As you enter Harissa, you can enjoy a panoramic view of green hills, the city of Jounié, and the Mediterranean Sea.





## MONASTERY OF OUR LADY OF SALVATION

The Monastery of Our Lady of Salvation (also called the Sherfeh Monastery or Deir Al Sherfeh) is a huge, old white stone monastery that includes a church dating back to 1878, as well as a library and a printing press. The monastery holds a valuable icon of Our Lady of Salvation dating from 1787. The monastery serves as the summer resort of the Syriac Catholic patriarchy. Next to it is a clerical school that the patriarchy supervises, as well as a relatively modern church painted light green inside and with tinted glass windows.



### Driving Directions

After you pass the Arabic welcome sign for Harissa, drive 0.7km, and you will reach a fork in the road with an Arabic sign pointing back towards Ghosta, Bzoummar, and Achqout (i.e., the road on which you came). Take the left fork, and after approximately 150m you will reach the Monastery of Our Lady of Salvation.



## SACRED HEART SISTERS' CONVENT

Built by Michel Gemayel in honor of his sister, Mother Mary Elias, this stone and cement building still operates today as a school and convent. It includes a small chapel built in 1963.



### Driving Directions

From the Monastery of Our Lady of Salvation, continue driving straight ahead for a few meters, and you will reach the main road; follow the main road to the left. You will see shops on your left, and an Arabic sign pointing left towards Ghosta, Bzoummar, and Achqout, and an Arabic/English sign pointing straight ahead towards the center of Harissa. Continue driving straight ahead here, following the sign towards Harissa. After 0.5km, you will reach the village square and an intersection. (On your right there is a pharmacy, and on your left there is a well.) Turn left here. After 200m you will see the Sacred Heart Sisters' Convent on the left.



## CHURCH AND MONASTERY OF ST. JOSEPH AL HARF

The Monastery of St. Joseph Al Harf, now neglected, is a yellow stone monastery established in 1740 by the Papal Priest Youhanna Ntin. First used as a convent, it later became a monastery. Its façade is distinguished by stone arches topped by a slanting red brick roof. Facing it is the small, neglected church of St. Joseph, which is a rectangular building made of yellow stone.



### Driving Directions

Facing the Sacred Heart Sisters' Convent, there is a small road leading downwards. Follow this road for 70m, and you will reach the Church and Monastery of St. Joseph Al Harf.



## CHURCH OF OUR LADY OF TRANSFIGURATION

Originally built by priest Farah Shemal (a local nobleman) in 1631, the Church of Our Lady of Transfiguration is thought to be the first church constructed in the Harissa-Daroun area. It was later destroyed and then rebuilt in 1924, with a final renovation in 2002. The church has a carved wooden door under a yellow stone arch with a mosaic picture of mother Mary and baby Jesus above it. The tinted glass windows add to the beauty of the church. The church possesses ancient icons, including a valuable icon of mother Mary and baby Jesus dating back to the 16<sup>th</sup> or 17<sup>th</sup> century.



### Driving Directions

From the Monastery of St. Joseph Al Harf, return to the Sacred Heart Sisters' Convent and turn right to continue driving in the same direction as before. After 0.6km you will reach a fork, and, directly ahead, the Church of Our Lady of Transfiguration.



## CHURCH OF ST. ANTHONY THE GREAT (MAR ANTONIOS AL KABIR)

Mar Antonios Al Kabir a beautiful small church built by priest Youhanna Shemali in 1632 and recently renovated in 2000. Its entrance is comprised of one large stone arch. The church has a white door and, inside, an arched altar and arched ceiling.



### Driving Directions

Facing the Church of Our Lady of Transfiguration, next to the church's salon, is a small narrow road leading downwards. If you follow this road for a couple of hundred meters you will reach the Church of St. Anthony the Great (Mar Antonios Al Kabir).



## SYRIAC ST. EPHRAM CHURCH

The Syriac St. Ephram Church is a small, simple church built in 1788 by a villager named Boutros Al Moqawamm Al Darouni. It contains figures of Mother Mary. The church's history includes serving as a refuge for the Patriarch Al Tayyan, who fled from his village, Qannoubine, when Napoleon invaded the area in 1798. Al Tayyan settled next to this church in 1809.



### Driving Directions

Go behind the Church of Our Lady of Transfiguration, and directly in front of you will be the municipality building. To your left, next to the municipality building, is a road. Follow this road to the left for 40m, and you will reach a fork in the road. Take the left fork then turn right at the next fork. (To your right, you will see green hills.) Follow the paved road for 1.1km, and you will reach another fork in the road; once again, take the right fork. About 1.5km ahead you will reach a dead end road. Directly in front of you between the pine trees is the Syriac St. Ephram Church.



## CHURCH AND MONASTERY OF ST. ANTHONY OF PADUA (MAR ANTONIOS AL BADAWANI)

The private Church of St. Anthony was built for the Khazen family in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. It is a small, yellow stone church with a slanting red brick roof top. Directly next to it is the Monastery of St. Anthony of Padua, built in 1681 by the Franciscans and used historically as a refuge for priests. It was renovated in 1974.



### Driving Directions

From the Syriac St. Ephram Church, return to the main road and the village square in the middle of Harissa. Continue driving straight ahead through the village square, and you will reach a fork in the road. Take the right fork. Soon after, you will reach a second fork in the road; again take the right fork. Follow the road for 100m, and you will be able to see the Statue of the Virgin Mary (Notre Dame du Liban) in the distance. You also will see a small road to the right with an Arabic/English sign pointing right towards the Télépherique Restaurant. Turn right here, and drive 176m to reach the Church and Monastery of St. Anthony of Padua (Mar Antonios Al Badawani).



## STATUE OF THE VIRGIN MARY (NOTRE DAME DU LIBAN)

Erected in 1904 and officially opened in 1908, the gigantic bronze statue of the Virgin Mary was inaugurated by the Maronite Patriarch Hoayek to mark the 50th anniversary of the Immaculate Conception Doctrine. There is a chapel at the base of the statue and a spiral staircase leading to the top. Below the 8.5m statue are churches of several denominations. Pope John Paul II visited the shrine in May 1997. The statue is located at Harissa, on a mountain summit 600 meters above the Bay of Jounié, and it offers a beautiful panoramic view of the coastline. A cable car (télépherique) can be taken up the mountain from Jounié to reach the statue and shrine.



### Driving Directions

From the Church and Monastery of St. Anthony of Padua, return to the sign, driving on the same road for 0.3km, and you will reach the Statue of the Virgin Mary (Notre Dame du Liban) and the three churches.



## CHURCH OF IMM AL NOUR

The Church of Im Al Nour is located beneath the Statue of the Virgin Mary (Notre Dame du Liban) at Harissa. It is a serene, stone church with tinted glass windows built. It contains a statue of Mother Mary that was carved by the artist Youssef el Houyek, and which toured Lebanon in 1954.



### Driving Directions

Located next to the Statue of the Virgin Mary at Harissa.



## CHURCH OF THE REPENTANCE

The Church of the Repentance was established in 1997 especially for visitors who wish to confess and repent while visiting Harissa and Notre Dame du Liban. It contains an icon of Jesus carrying the lost lamb, symbolizing God's forgiveness of human sins.

Photo not Available



**Driving Directions**

Located next to the Statue of the Virgin Mary at Harissa.



## CHURCH OF OUR LADY LOURDES

The shrine at Harissa near Notre Dame du Liban includes the Church of Our Lady Lourdes, with its beautiful tinted glass entrance. The glass displays the picture of Mother Mary, Jesus Christ, and the twelve Apostles. Today, most religious ceremonies at Harissa take place here, and there is also a souvenir shop.



**Driving Directions**

Located next to the Statue of the Virgin Mary at Harissa.



## CATHEDRAL OF ST. PETER AND PAUL

Built between 1947 and 1962 in a purely Byzantine style, the Cathedral of St. Peter and Paul is characterized by its beautiful architecture and its several domes and bells. On the entrance of the cathedral are mosaic pictures of Abraham and Sara from the Old Testament. The inside walls of the church are covered with gold painted mosaics depicting the saints, the Virgin Mary, and Jesus Christ, as well as events such as the Last Supper and the death of the Virgin.

Facing the cathedral is the Monastery of the Greek Catholic Missionaries of St Paul, founded in 1903, which includes a vast library.



### Driving Directions

Directly in front of the gate to the Statue of the Virgin Mary, take the main road to the right. About 150m ahead you will see, to your left, the Convent of the Imm Al Maouna Al Daima (a huge, yellow stone structure established in 1938) and facing the convent is the Papal Embassy. Immediately after the Embassy is the huge Basilica church, and 200m straight ahead of it is the Cathedral of St. Peter and Paul.



## CHURCH OF OUR LADY OF CARMEL (CARMEL WALIDATALLAH)

The Church of Our Lady of Carmel was built in 1964 by Carmelite sisters who came from Spain and used this building as a convent. The sisters residing at the convent are not allowed to meet the visitors. The convent is usually open to visitors from 8:30-11:30am and 3:15-5:15pm.



### Driving Directions

From the Cathedral of St. Peter and Paul, continue driving straight ahead on the main road, and you will reach the Church of Our Lady of Carmel (Carmel Walidatallah).



## CONVENT OF THE LADY OF BKERKI

The Convent of the Lady of Bkerki has been the winter residence of Lebanon's Maronite Patriarch since 1830, when it replaced Deir Qannoubine as the patriarchal see. The beautiful yellow stone, red-roofed residence, set among pine trees, was constructed in 1893 around an earlier monastery from 1703. Above the Italianate entrance is the Patriarchal coat-of-arms with Arabic, Syriac, and Latin inscriptions of an Old Testament quotation: "The glory of Lebanon has been given to Him." Visitors are welcome to visit the courtyard, the reception hall where the Patriarch holds audiences, the portrait gallery, and the church, which is famous for its columns of fossilized stone. The residence is also known for its rich library. Bkerki is located at 200 meters elevation, below the summit of Harissa, with a beautiful view of the Bay of Jounié.



### Driving Directions

From the Church of Our Lady of Carmel, return to the main road and turn right to continue driving in the same direction as before. After 490m you will see a gas station on your left. Keep driving straight ahead for 3.5km, and you will reach Bkerki and a roundabout with an Arabic sign pointing to the Patriarchy. To the left of the sign is the road leading to the Convent of the Lady of Bkerki.

# DISCOVER LEBANON GUIDE

## Where to EAT

### Belle Vue Restaurant

Traditional Lebanese food and pizza, located at Harissa. Tel. +961-(0)3-821128.

### Télépherique Restaurant

Traditional Lebanese food, located at Harissa. Tel. +961-(0)9-263915.