



STEPHEN KING

The Hong Kong-based photographer shares images from his unforgettable Svalbard journey (p.110)

Name one of the most breathtaking locations you've ever photographed.

If I had to choose, I would say flying over the river deltas in south Iceland, which is like flying over a giant painted canvas. The shapes and colours there are amazing. A close second would be the lava fields of Kilauea on the Big Island of Hawaii. Seeing the lava flowing into the sea close up, at dawn, is one of the most awesome sights in the world. Sadly, as we are seeing today, it is also awesomely dangerous and destructive.

If you could take a famous person on a trip with you, who would it be and where would you go?

I would love to travel with one of my favourite landscape photographers, Peter Dombrovskis, around his home turf of Tasmania. It would be amazing to see up close how he works and sees the landscape. Sadly he passed away over 20 years ago at the young age of 51.



OLIVIER YOAN

The Hong Kong-based photographer gets behind the lens this month for our cover star, Jane Louey (p.90)

What's your favourite place to go on holiday?

The South of France. I grew up there and I just love the weather, food and nature. Plus my family is there.

What accessory do you just have to take on your trips?

My Bose headphones. They are amazing and I get my inspiration from music.

What do you love about travelling?

Meeting people that are so different from me but with who I can really learn from and connect with.

Name one of the most breathtaking locations you've ever photographed

Bavaria in Germany.



MANISH LAKHANI

The travel photographer and explorer offers a visually immersive tour of Ladakh (p.126)

What accessory do you always take on trips?

A Swiss knife. It's useful for my kind of travel.

What do you love about travelling?

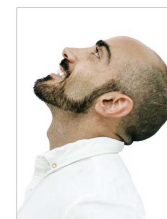
Travel is a school for me and I love being in a school. I love learning about people, culture and places. I also like making new friends and travel gives me this opportunity often.

Name one of the most breathtaking locations you've photographed.

Not one particular place, every location I've been, from remote places in India, the highlands of the Himalayas to the far reaches of Asia, has been breathtaking for me. It's really difficult to choose just one place as each one is incomparable to another.

What's your favourite travel app and why?

I don't use any. I'm still old-fashioned, and books and local people make travel more interesting to me.



WALID RASHID

The Lebanon-based photographer showcases people to know and places to see in Beirut (p.116)

Name one of the most breathtaking locations you've photographed.

The sulphur mines of Kawah Ijen volcano in Indonesia is for me a good reminder of the sublime beauty as well as majestic power of mother nature. My photo series entitled "Hope in the Inferno" conveys the eerie sense of mysticism that emanated from this place.

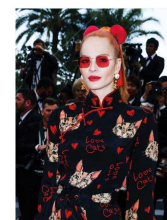
If you could take a famous person on a trip with you, who would it be and where would you go?

Having won a travel scholarship with National Geographic in 2011 on which I was mentored by wildlife photographer Jason Edwards in South Africa for 11 days, I would love the opportunity to travel and be mentored by him on another trip to Antarctica.

What gadget do you just have to take on your trips?

My camera. It's the only port-hole through which I can see the world and communicate stories about mankind and nature.

CONTRIBUTORS



CRAZY ROUGE

The Shanghai-based photographer goes to the Cannes Film Festival and shares snaps from the celebrity-studded parties she attended (p.38)

What's your favourite place to go on holiday?

I love Ibiza. It's a magical island with an incredible and powerful energy. It's a destination that has it all: you can find the best parties, DJs and beach clubs without question, but you can also find the most lovely pockets of tranquillity on the island—little secret beaches and coves where the water is so beautiful.

What gadget do you always take with you on trips?

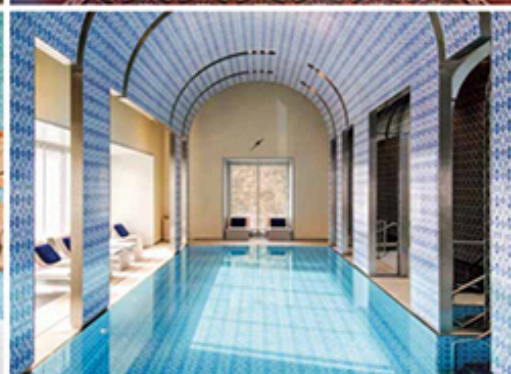
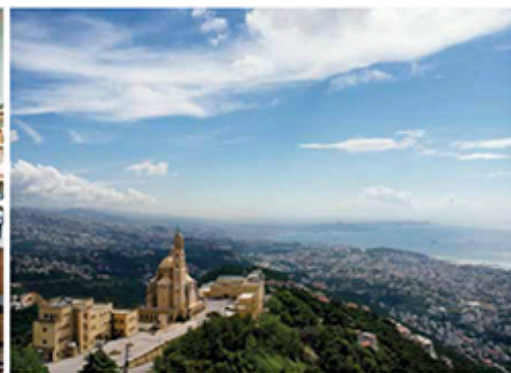
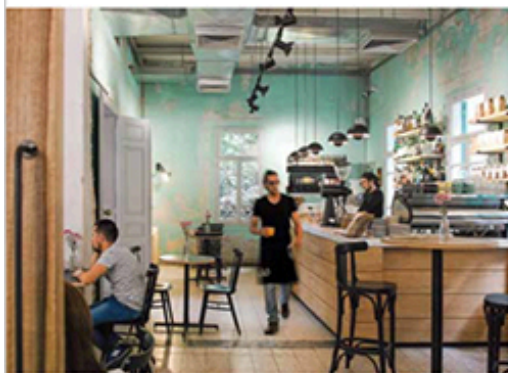
My GoPro Hero 5, because I want to better document my life.

If you could take a celebrity on a trip with you, who would it be and why?

Victor Turpin. I had the chance to meet him at Cannes and he's hot.

What's your favourite travel app?

Google Maps. Haha.



INSIDER GUIDE TO BEIRUT

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: KALEJ COFFEE; THE VIEW OVER BEIRUT FROM HARASSA; VILLA CLARA HOTEL; L'ESPACE SPA AT THE AL MUSTAN HOTEL; STEPHEN SAUER GALLERY; A CLASSIC LEBANESE MEZE AT LUZA BEIRUT; IMAGES: MARCO PINARELLI/ALCALI; COURTESY OF VILLA CLARA

It was known as the Paris of the Middle East before 25 years of bloody civil war reduced much of it to rubble. It's been a long road back since peace returned in 1990, but Beirut has risen spectacularly from the ashes and is one of this year's hottest travel destinations, with art, food, hotels and nightlife to rival London, Shanghai and New York. Overlooking the Mediterranean, with green hills forming a protective arch to the east, the Lebanese capital is as beautiful as it is buzzing. Lovers of Middle Eastern food will find a dynamic dining scene offering everything from traditional ice cream parlours, hipster coffee shops and bustling falafel stalls to stylish fine-dining restaurants serving modern takes on classic Lebanese dishes. Beirutis are famous party animals and this is a city that never sleeps, so expect to be dancing until dawn at one of the famous rooftop bars or subterranean nightclubs. Thanks to Lebanese haute couturier Elie Saab, Beirut is firmly on the fashion map. Locals dress to impress—even if they're just popping out to buy milk—so bring your style A-game. Beirut is also one of the most progressive cities in the region when it comes to LGBT issues, women's rights and multiculturalism—something that is reflected in Beirut's plentiful street art and the rise of new contemporary galleries and art fairs. Although a modern, cosmopolitan city today, Beirut's history lives on through its crumbling Ottoman-era architecture, old mosques, Roman baths and the seafront promenade known as the Corniche, a people-watching paradise since its genesis in the 1920s. The physical scars of the civil war are still apparent in bullet-pocked walls and bomb-damaged buildings, but the city feels safe and welcoming. Travel to certain areas, however, is not advised, so check with your concierge before venturing off the beaten track. With so much to see and do, **Jakki Phillips** enlisted the help of five local insiders to plan the perfect trip. Here are their top tips for Beirut and across Lebanon. Photography by **Walid Rashid**

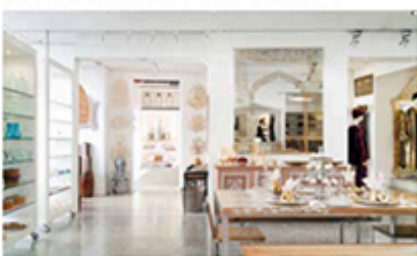
JOANNA LAURA CONSTANTINE

The wild and whimsical creations of Joanna Laura Constantine, one of Beirut's best-known jewellery designers, adorn such celebrities as Rihanna, Kim Kardashian and Jessica Alba, and regularly grace the pages of *Vogue*, *Harper's Bazaar*, *Elle* and, of course, *Asia Tatler*. The 36-year-old Lebanese American launched her eponymous brand in New York in 2008 after studying fashion at Parsons School of Design. When Joanna returned to Beirut after graduating to set up her studio, she began to develop designs inspired by the sights and sounds of the Middle East. One of her early collections was titled *Byblos* after the ancient city in Lebanon, and another, *Petra*, was inspired by the famous ruins in Jordan. Ten years on and her mood boards continue to reflect her life in Beirut but now have a more urban aesthetic. Last year's edgy industrial collection, *Organised Chaos*, saw chokers and cuffs designed using metal nuts and bolts, while the playfully cool *Urban Chic* range was influenced by streetwear. Joanna is married to Lebanese entrepreneur Karim Tabet and the couple live in the hip Achrafieh neighbourhood. Here she recommends her favourite places to work, rest and play.



URBAN PLANNING
Clockwise from left:
Joanna Laura Constantine at Le 66 Champs Elysées in Beirut; Kalei; Orient 499; earrings from Joanna's Tribale collection

LEBANESE ZEN
From its hilltop perch on the outskirts of Beirut, the charmingly retro family-owned *Al Bustan Hotel* offers great views over the city but the star attraction is its spa. Housed in a restored 200-year-old stone mansion that sits within the lush hotel gardens, *L'Espace* is a sanctuary of Lebanese Zen, with grand archways, intricate mosaic tiling, ornate screens and glowing glass lanterns. Recharge with the help of ancient Middle Eastern cleansing and purification rituals or steam away stress in the luxury hammam. "I love having a glass of wine in the garden after a treatment and soaking up the serenity of the place," says Joanna. hotelalbustan.com



SHOPPING FX
"Le 66 Champs Elysées Beirut on Foch Avenue is a cool concept store selling gorgeous things. It's my go-to place for fashion, accessories, books—everything really. I'm also a regular at *Orient 499* on Omar Daouk Street. The store promotes sustainable luxury and sells handicrafts made by artisans from

the region. It helps preserve local cultural traditions but its products also have a modern twist. I've bought so many things here—candles, handmade soaps, homeware and clothes." le66.fr, orient499.com

FINE WINE
"Château Musar, Domaine des Tourelles, Isir and Château Kefraya are just a few of the estates producing world-class wine in Lebanon. Make sure you sample as many as you can. It's also worth visiting the beautiful *Château Ksara* in the Bekaa Valley where they offer tours and tastings." chateauxksara.com

COFFEE STOP
"Kalei is a super-cool coffee shop and micro-roastery tucked away in the backstreets of the buzzing Mar Mikhael neighbourhood. The design is bright and minimalist, with distressed walls, turquoise wooden shutters and a cute little courtyard shaded by towering trees decorated with lanterns. I like to sit outside on the patio, sip coffee and work on my designs." kaleicoffee.com



PARTY TIME
"For cocktails and dancing there is nowhere better than the rooftop bar and nightclub *Capitole*, which serves amazing cocktails with great music and incredible panoramic views over the city. Beirut people love to party, so this is a must if you want to experience the nocturnal spirit of the city. We'll usually warm up with drinks at *Hotel Alberg's* rooftop bar." capitolebeirut.com, albergobeirut.com

STRETCH IT OUT
"Yoga Souk in Saifi Village is my favourite place for yoga and meditation. It's a beautiful space with great energy and fantastic teachers. Drop-ins are welcome." yogasouk.com



GREGORY GATSERELIA

Recognised by *Architectural Digest* as one of the top 100 interior designers in the world, Gregory Gatsleria and his award-winning team at Gatsleria Design are responsible for some of Beirut's most beautiful spaces. He shares a few local hotspots that are close to his heart.



CREATIVE SCENE

"Saleh Barakat Gallery has its finger on the pulse of the local art scene, so I drop by regularly to keep up to date with the best established and up-and-coming Lebanese artists." agialart.com

SEAFOOD AND SUNSETS

A 45-minute drive north from Beirut, in the coastal town of Batroun, is **Chez Maguy**, a wonderfully rustic waterfront restaurant overlooking the Mediterranean and serving freshly

caught fish. Gregory says "the sunsets here are like nowhere else in the world."

FARM TO TABLE

Founded by social activist and entrepreneur Kamal Mouzawak—who also launched Beirut's first farmers market, Souk el Tayeb—**Tawlet** is one of Lebanon's most remarkable restaurants. Different chefs (amateur and professional) cook each day using seasonal, farm-fresh ingredients to showcase dishes from their home region. "The lunch buffet is superb and changes daily. I've never been disappointed." soukeltayeb.com

TAKE A DIP

Very little has changed at **Sporting Beach Club** since it opened in the 1960s and its shabby-chic charm continues to attract new generations keen to sunbathe, swim in the seawater pool, play backgammon under blue parasols or feast in its famed seafood restaurant. "I love it because it's simple," says Gregory.

LIFE'S A BEACH

"When I need to escape the city I head south for around 25 minutes to my favourite private beach, **Lazy B**. The sandy beach is clean, there's a natural sea pool and it's very peaceful. Like many of the best beaches in Lebanon, you need to pay but it's worth it." lazyb.me



SLICE OF LIFE

From top: Gregory Gatsleria at his favourite restaurant, **Tawlet**; Saleh Barakat Gallery; **Lazy B** private beach

NOUR SALAME

It was a love of Lebanese culture and frustration with the lack of information about artists in the region that inspired Nour Salamé to launch Kaph Books in 2016. In the two years since, the publishing house has become one of the leading voices in fine art and photography in the Middle East. Here Nour suggests some activities for creatives visiting her beloved home city.



industrial neighbourhood of Karantina. Its founder, Andrée Sfeir-Semler, was born in Beirut and runs a sister space in Hamburg, Germany. "A standout exhibition for me was Lebanese artist Rabih Mroué's *A Leap Year*, which was staged at the gallery last year," says Nour. "Kaph Books published the related book, *Diary of a Leap Year*. It's our best-selling title so far." kaph-books.com

ONE OF A KIND

"**Marfa** is a small independent art space which opened just two years ago in the busy port district. They represent up-and-coming young artists from the region, all very conceptual and contemporary. The gallery really is a one of a kind in Beirut." marfaprojects.com



HOME AND AWAY

Maison Tarazi is run by a family of master craftsmen specialising in woodwork, copper, mother-of-pearl and glass who have been creating exquisite handmade furniture for the Middle East's A-list since 1862. Their showroom is a real Aladdin's cave of lovingly made pieces influenced by Syrian, Lebanese, Ottoman, Moroccan and Indian styles. "This is artisan carpentry at its best," says Nour. maison-tarazi.com

CULTURAL CALLINGS

From top: Nour Salamé at **Papercup**; **Maison Tarazi**; **Sfeir-Semler Gallery**

BOOKWORM

"My favourite independent bookstore in Beirut is the cosy, characterful and absolutely charming **Papercup**, which is tucked away in a quiet street in Mar Mikhael. They have a great selection of art, design, architecture and photography books. It's a great spot to hang out, relax and meet Beirut's art crowd. They also make a great chai latte." papercupstore.com

CULTURAL CALLINGS

The dying wish of wealthy Lebanese aristocrat and art collector Nicolas Ibrahim Surock was that his palatial villa be turned into a museum so the public could share his love of the arts. After his death in 1952 his wish came true and today the **Nicolas Ibrahim Surock Museum** is one of Beirut's main cultural attractions, exhibiting local and international modern and contemporary art. Book ahead if you want to have lunch in the fantastic museum restaurant, **Resto**, which serves traditional mezze with a twist. If the weather's fine,

reserve a table outside on the tree-lined courtyard and make sure you try the halva-inspired chewy sahlab ice cream topped with tahini floss and crunchy pistachios. There's also a great museum shop selling a tempting selection of art books, locally made crafts and jewellery. "Go for the art, stay for the food," says Nour. surockmuseum.com

CONCEPTUAL ART

Sfeir-Semler Gallery is at the cutting edge of Lebanon's contemporary art scene and stages thought-provoking conceptual and minimalist mixed-media exhibitions at its sprawling space in the



ELI REZKALLAH

Creative maverick Eli Rezkallah is the groundbreaking artist and photographer behind *Plastik*, a playful, provocative and often controversial art and fashion magazine that has shaken up the Lebanese media industry. The 30-year-old Beirut launched the outlandish, oversized title in 2009 when he was only 21 and the following year won Best Publication in the Middle East at the Dubai International Printing Awards. In 2016, the rest of the world tuned in when Plastik's daring cover photo of Miley Cyrus went viral. The singer-songwriter was shot naked wearing only a dessert-themed eye patch and nipple covers. The genius of Eli, a master of visual storytelling, lies in his ability to lace glossy, hyper-real photo essays with darker socio-political messages. Here he recommends his favourite places to eat in Beirut.



IMAGE: MARCO PINARELLI / ELZA



LEBANESE BREAKFAST

"My favourite place for an authentic Lebanese breakfast is **Al Soussi** in Mar Elias. Try the traditional foul (fava beans with lemon, crushed garlic and cumin) and the scrambled eggs with qawarma (aromatic fried chopped lamb)."

BUZZY BRUNCH

Located in the hip Achrafieh neighbourhood and occupying the second floor of a former 19th-century palace, **Liza Beirut** is the stylish hangout of Beirut's bright and beautiful, so dress to impress. The **opulent** interiors have a contemporary Middle Eastern flavour—think tropical wallpaper, geometric tiling, artsy hanging lanterns and ornate latticework. Eli recommends the Sunday brunch from noon to 4pm. Wash down delicious Lebanese treats with a glass of Château Kefraya Myst Rose from the Bekaa Valley. lizebeirut.com

SUPER SHAWARMA

"**Restaurant Joseph** serves one of the best shawarmas in Lebanon. It has layers of perfectly thin, delicious fresh bread filled with generous layers of juicy, tender meat served traditional style with lettuce and pickles. Everything is the best quality, which is why it tastes so good." This charming no-frills restaurant can be found in the heart of Sin El Fil. Just follow your nose.

LUNCHING OUT

Another of Beirut's buzziest hangouts is **Meat the Fish** in Saifi Village. Diners often spill out onto the pavement where they perch on wooden pallets sipping local craft beers. As to be expected from such a cool culinary

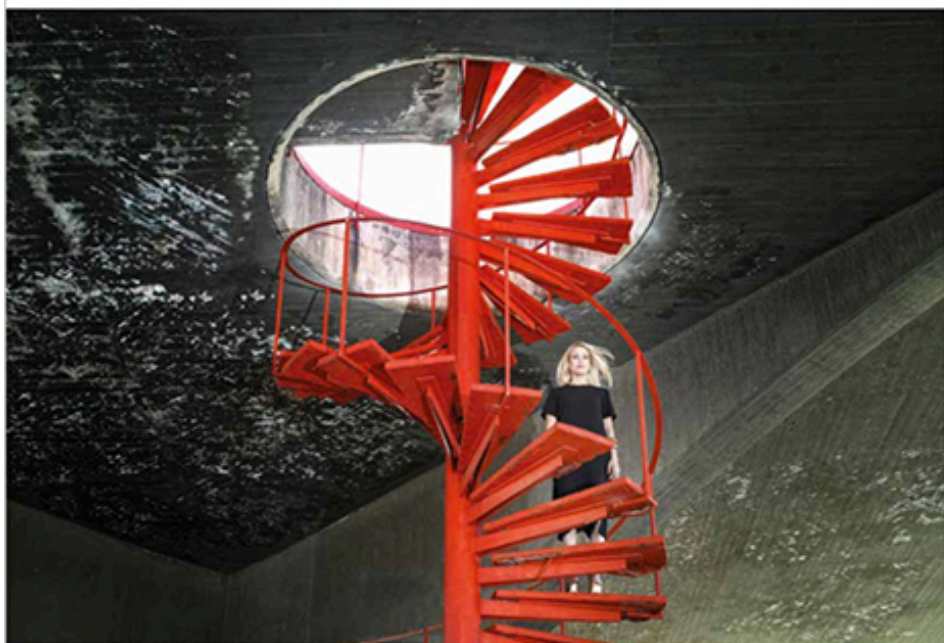
institution, the produce is fresh, seasonal, sustainable and of tip-top quality. There's also a mini market area selling seafood. "It's without a doubt the best-quality fish in town," says Eli. meatthefish.com

DINNER TALK

Baron in Mar Mikhael is a small restaurant with a big reputation. Chef Athanasios Kargatzidis sources ingredients from Beirut's farmers markets, Tripoli's fishing boats and the fields of the Bekaa Valley. Expect traditional recipes and local ingredients presented in an imaginative new way. "Athanasios is one of the most creative chefs in town," says Eli, who has been a regular since Baron opened in 2016. Watch Athanasios in action by securing the chef's table, which seats seven and overlooks the open kitchen. tastykitchen.com/baron



A TASTE OF BEIRUT
Clockwise from opposite page: Eli Rezkallah hanging out at his favourite coffee shop, Sip; Baron restaurant; an edition of Eli's Plastik magazine; hummus, sesame and tomato salad at Liza Beirut



NOUR AL NIMER

Beirutis love throwing lavish parties. If you're feasting in the homes of the city's art crowd, you're likely to be dining off beautiful porcelain created by Nour al Nimer for her luxury tableware brand, Nimerology. The daughter of a Palestinian father and Turkish mother, the designer was born and raised in Beirut, and house-proud Lebanese can't get enough of her imaginative collections. Nour's distinctive style grew from the art that surrounded her as a child. Her father, Rami el Nimer, is a renowned collector with a vast archive of Islamic art, including Ottoman ceramics and antique textiles. Today, Nour reinterprets motifs and patterns from these beautiful artefacts and blends them with inspiration gathered from her travels. The result is enchanting collections such as *I Left My Heart In Mexico* and *An Ode To Scandinavia*. The talented young designer currently lives between New York and Istanbul but returns to Lebanon regularly to visit old haunts. Here are some of her favourites.



LIFE ON A PLATE
Clockwise from top: Nour al Nimer at the Oscar Niemeyer-designed Rashid Karami International Fair in Tripoli; one of Niemeyer's iconic domes in Tripoli; the ruins in Baalbek; a plate from Nour's *I'm Off To Join The Circus* collection

UNEXPECTED ARCHITECTURE

"Design enthusiasts should make a pilgrimage to Tripoli (70km north of Beirut) to marvel at the abandoned structures of Brazilian architect Oscar Niemeyer. His futurist masterpieces were supposed to host a trade fair. Building began in 1967 but stopped in 1975 because of the civil war and never restarted. Known as the Rashid Karami International Fair, the abandoned site is now a forgotten shrine to the legendary architect spread over a square kilometre of landscaped gardens. Most days the area is completely deserted except for a few local skateboarders riding Niemeyer's iconic domes."



ISLAMIC ART

"My father is an art collector and he runs a non-profit art and culture space called Dar El Nimer in the heart of Beirut where he shows his vast collection of art, antiques and ancient artefacts from the Middle East and around the world. He's a proud Palestinian and is particularly keen to promote education and discussion about culture from his homeland." darelnimer.org

FASHION STOP

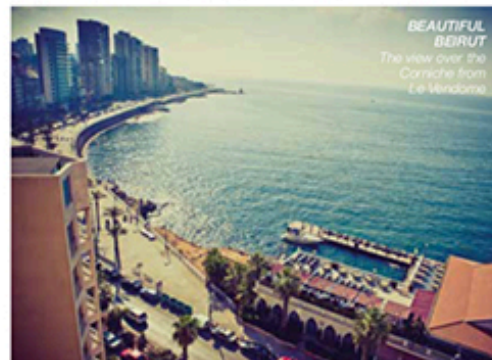
"Every time I'm in Beirut I visit the boutique of Lebanese-American fashion designer Rami Kadi. I love his loud and colourful prints." rami-kadi.com

ANCIENT RUINS

"The most impressive archaeological site in Lebanon is a Roman temple complex in Baalbek (85km northeast of Beirut). Well preserved and spectacular in size and beauty, these ancient monuments rival those in Rome and are a Unesco World Heritage site."



WHERE TO STAY



BEAUTIFUL BEIRUT
The view over the Corniche from Le Vendôme

INTERCONTINENTAL PHOENICIA BEIRUT

Gleaming marble, shimmering chandeliers and frothing fountains await you at this grande dame, which first opened in 1961 and continues to fly the flag for classic luxury with refined service, fantastic Lebanese cuisine and elegant interiors. Highlights include the sea views, a top-class buffet breakfast, sunset shisha by the pool and the location—the waterfront promenade known as the Corniche is only a few minutes away. pheniciaibeirut.com

LE VENDÔME

This intimate yet opulent oasis of calm is located on Beirut's famous Corniche, so be sure to request a sea-facing room with a balcony. Dinner at its fab rooftop restaurant, Sydney's, is also a must. Facilities are limited but guests have complimentary access to the spa, gym and pool at sister property The Phoenicia via a free two-minute transfer or short walk. levendomebeirut.com

VILLA CLARA

This hip little boutique hotel has bags of charm and a cool, arty vibe that will appeal to relaxed creatives seeking a buzzy, friendly hangout with heavenly food and rocking tunes courtesy of guest DJs who take over the garden terrace for impromptu party nights. villaclara.fr

HOTEL ALBERGO

The distinctive ochre-coloured mansion that houses this Relais & Châteaux heritage hotel (below) is a gem of traditional Lebanese architecture dating back to the 1930s. Each of the 33 suites is a uniquely designed treasure trove of antiques and vintage furniture. Ride the glass-framed art deco lift up to the roof terrace for cocktails among the bougainvillea and panoramic views of the city. albergobeirut.com



BEIT DOUMA

This idyllic hillside retreat is a lovingly restored 18th-century townhouse located 80 kilometres north of Beirut in the sleepy village of Douma (beit means home). Expect beautiful interiors, walls lined with art, a sunny terrace perfect for afternoons curled up with a book, magnificent views, and incredible Lebanese home cooking. soukeltayeb.com