



"Discovering the Treasures of Lebanon and Syria & Private Residences"

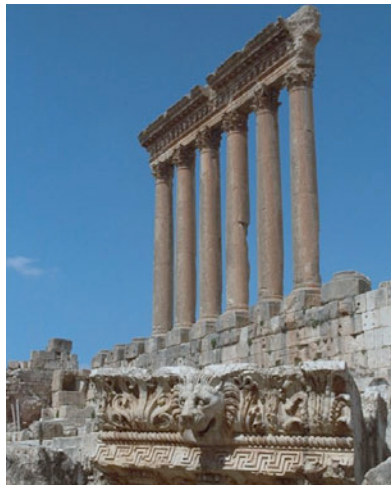
Sponsored by

Institute of Classical Architecture & Classical America

Arranged by

Pamela Huntington Darling, Exclusive Cultural Travel Programs

Friday, May 27 to Sunday, June 5, 2011



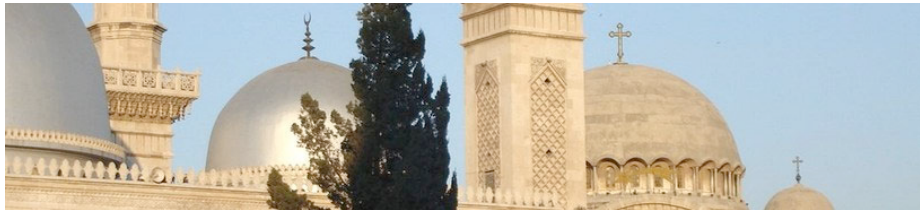
The Institute of Classical Architecture & Classical America is pleased to announce its first, unprecedented tour to Lebanon and Syria, renowned for their unparalleled heritage, culture and warm hospitality, priding more spectacular UNESCO World Heritage Sites than any other countries. During nine extraordinary, inspirational days, our significant program, organized in conjunction with Pamela Huntington Darling, will offer participants expert-guided visits conducted by architectural historians to unrivaled sites erected during the Phoenician, Greek, Roman, Umayyad, Crusader, and Ottoman periods, superbly well preserved, as well as momentous sites of 18th and 19th century classic Lebanese and Syrian architecture.

We will be the privileged guests of distinguished international hosts for luncheons, cocktail receptions and dinners in outstanding private residences and palaces—not open to the public—housing the highest level of architecture, décor, and rare and extensive collections of art.

This once-in-a-lifetime journey will begin in Beirut, acclaimed as the “Paris of the East”, where we will stay for 4 nights; then we will go to Damascus for 2 nights, the world’s oldest inhabited city; 1 night in Palmyra, an absolute must for its splendor and heritage; culminating in glory for 2 nights in Aleppo, the historic and latest coveted destination of international elites and aesthetes, such as Joseph Achkar and Michel Charrière, our hosts in Byblos and Aleppo, the Agha Khan, fashion setter Christian Louboutin, and interior designer Jacques Garcia.

We will enjoy residing in majestic 5-star boutique hotels, most of which are former 17th and 18th century palaces or stately residences, offering pure luxury and opulent, warm Oriental décor of exquisite taste, all the amenities of 5-star European luxury hotels, with peaceful surroundings, glorious views, rooftop terraces, fine cuisine and hospitality to perfection. We will stay at Hotel Albergó Relais & Châteaux in Beirut, Talisman Hotel in Damascus, Dedeman Hotel in Palmyra, and Beit Salahieh in Aleppo.

Tour price: Land Cost: 8.5 days/9 nights, 5-star hotels: \$6,000 per person based on double occupancy; single supplement of \$750 applies, based on 15 participants minimum and 18 maximum, and an exchange rate of \$1.33/1 Euro; and a fully tax-deductible \$500 donation to ICA&CA. Please call and email Pamela Huntington Darling at: Tel. +33 1 45 67 62 81 and Email: pdarling@exclusiveculturaltours.com for more information and to register.



This exclusive cultural tour is designed for discerning travelers, enthusiasts of emblematic historical sites, admirable palaces housing remarkable décor, and unique cultural experiences. We will enjoy expert-guided visits of legendary sites, some inaccessible to the public, and be received for luncheons, cocktail receptions and dinners by distinguished hosts in their stunning, historical residences. Throughout the program, an architectural historian will accompany us.

Tour Highlights

Friday, May 27 to Tuesday, May 31, 2011: Lebanon

Lebanon is a unique cultural destination. With 6,000 years of history, one of the oldest, continuously inhabited countries in the world, it is rich in diverse cultural heritage of the civilizations that have left their inimitable imprint, many of which are UNESCO World Heritage Sites. Lebanon also offers breathtaking natural beauty, where mountains slope to meet the Mediterranean Sea, and where valleys dotted with rivers and forests are abundant.

Beirut, the "Paris of the Middle East", named the top place to visit in 2009 by *The New York Times*, is a fascinating city, the focal point of the region's cultural life, renowned for its cultural activities, art, theatres, fashion, cuisine and nightlife, where the past and present blend harmoniously, and where creativity in every area is in full effervescence.

Welcome reception with Lady Sursock Cochrane at her residence, Palace Sursock, in Beirut's exclusive residential area, a unique 19th century mansion built by her notable family, surrounded by gardens, the largest private palace of the period, admirably maintained, decorated with museum-quality 16th-17th century Flemish and Italian paintings, rare pieces of furniture, Flemish tapestries, Persian carpets ... described by Joseph Achkar as "a thousand and one nights".

Baalbek, one of the most moving sites in Lebanon—its greatest Roman treasure—priding two UNESCO World Heritage Sites, counted among the wonders of the ancient world. The largest and most noble Roman temples ever built, among the best preserved, their monumental proportions proclaimed the power and wealth of Imperial Rome.

Anjar, a stronghold built by the Umayyad dynasty in the 8th century, the only archeological site entirely Arab in Lebanon, a stunning UNESCO World Heritage Site, revealing a regular layout reminiscent of the palace-cities of ancient times, a unique testimony to city planning under the Umayyad reign.

Private visit and dinner with George Asseily, Secretary General of the Arab British Chamber of Commerce, and Alexandra Asseily, in Bsous at their ancient and remarkably restored Silk Museum, followed by dinner in the gardens of their stunning residence overlooking the Mediterranean Sea.

Deir Al Qamar, a picturesque village overlooking the region with many well-preserved historical buildings, the only village in Lebanon typical of the 17th century, famous for its palaces displaying the ancient Lebanese architectural style, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, renowned for the castle of Emir Melhem Shehab, the mosque of Emir Fakhr Eddine, the palace of an Ottoman governor, its ancient stepped streets, walled gardens and a restored silk souk.

Beit Ed-Dine, renowned for its Palace Beiteddine, built over thirty years for Emir Bachir Chehab II, considered the best example of early 19th century classic Lebanese architecture and for its impressive collection of colorful Byzantine mosaics, luxurious Turkish baths and harem suites, beautifully groomed gardens and terraces dominating the valley.

Luncheon at the admirable residence of Raymond Audi, Chairman of the Audi Bank, and May Ogden-Smith, in Beit Ed-Dine, restored by architect Habib Debs, a perfect harmony of ancient and contemporary architecture surrounded by a landscape offering marvelous views, and an extraordinary collection of art.

Byblos, the first city in Phoenicia, around 5,000 BC, and one of the oldest, continuously inhabited cities in the world; one of the most important religious, commercial and cultural centers of the Mediterranean during the Roman period. Visit to the Phoenician temples, the Crusaders castle, the ancient port and ramparts built by the Crusaders.

Cocktails and Dinner at the residence of aesthetes and architects, Joseph Achkar and Michel Charrière, a majestic 18th century palace of a former Ottoman governor of Lebanon, meticulously restored by the proprietors, perched above the hillside village of Hosrayel, near the ancient city of Byblos. Shaded by eucalyptus trees and gardens, the interior features the owners' stunning décor of museum-quality antique textiles, furniture and decorative arts.

[Beirut Central District](#), (also referred to as "Solidere"), private visit with one of the chief architects instrumental in the recent reconstruction and rehabilitation of the city, and the landscape urban architect Thierry Huau, who was awarded in 1994 the city's urban landscaping project and who remained the city's landscape architect until 2000.

[Sidon](#), luncheon on the terrace of a 12th century Crusader-period building on the harbor, with spectacular views of the Sea Castle of Sidon.

[Tyre](#), Phoenician, Greek-Roman, then Tyre of the Crusaders, today a UNESCO World Heritage Site, priding significant archaeological remains, mainly from Roman times; including the Triumphal Arch, the Crusader cathedral, the Roman hippodrome from the 2nd century, one of the best conserved of the Roman period, and the Necropolis.

[Private visit and reception with Raymond Audi and May Ogden-Smith at the Audi Mosaic Museum in Beirut](#), housed in a prestigious palace, splendidly restored, priding a unique, spectacular collection of mosaics and artifacts from the Phoenician, Greek, Roman, and Umayyad periods.



[Tuesday, May 31 to Sunday, June 5 \(departure\): Damascus, Palmyra, and Aleppo](#)

Morning transfer to Syria, home to Damascus, the world's oldest inhabited city, Ugarit, where the first alphabet was found and Ma'aloula, where Aramaic, the language of Christ, is still spoken. Syria has been a meeting place for 12,000 years. Egyptian, Babylonian, Greek, Roman, Sumerian and Phoenician civilizations have left the country rich in archeological and cultural remains. The bazaars of Aleppo, the Crusader fortress at Krak des Chevaliers, the Roman sites of Bosra are just some of the highlights of a country with a living, breathing history, filled with inspiration.

[Bosra](#), its Roman Amphitheater, built in the 12th century, is one of the largest and most well preserved of the Roman East, a World Heritage Site. Early Christian ruins and several old mosques can also be admired within its great walls.

[Damascus](#), known as the "City of Jasmin", capital of Syria, awarded Arab Capital of Culture by UNESCO in 2008, first settled in the 2nd millennium BC, has a wealth of historical sites dating back to many different periods. Its ancient city, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is the oldest inhabited city in the world.

[Evening reception with the Deputy Chief of Mission and Chargé d'affaires at the Residence of the Ambassador of the United States of America to Syria](#), housed in a beautiful, modern villa in a lovely neighborhood of Damascus.

[Wednesday, June 1: Damascus](#)

[National Museum of Damascus](#), priding a world-class archeological collection and the Dura-Europos synagogue, dating back to the 2nd century, reconstructed in the Museum.

[Umayyad Mosque](#), one of the largest and oldest mosques in the world, the crown jewel of Damascus, whose mosaics show scenes from old Muslim Damascus, over 1,200 years ago, and harbors the relics of John the Baptist.

[Mausoleum of Saladin](#), built in 1196, resting place of the medieval Ayyubid Sultan Saladin, displaying a remarkable mix of Hohenzollern, Ayyubid and Ottoman architecture.

[Azm Palace](#), originally built in 1750 for the Ottoman governor of Damascus, whose architecture is an excellent example of Damascene traditional houses, now the Museum of Arts and Popular Traditions.

[Old Christian quarter](#): the ancient Chapel of Saint Ananias, the only early Christian house of worship from the 1st century left in the city, where Ananias baptized Saul, who became Paul the Apostle; and the site of the old gate of Damascus, known as the window of Saint Paul, through which his disciples helped him flee from Damascus.

[Evening reception with H.E. The French Ambassador to Syria at his Residence](#), housed in a beautiful, modern villa in a lovely neighborhood of Damascus.



Thursday, June 2: Damascus – Palmyra

Palmyra A scenic, morning drive across the desert to Palmyra, the highlight of Syria’s archeology, named the “Venice of sands”, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. A Roman city built in the heart of the Syrian Desert set in a beautiful oasis, an important stop along the Silk Road on the caravan route of Antiquity that made this merchant city wealthy and splendid.

Temple of Baal, the most striking edifice in Palmyra, a colossal temple, considered the most important religious building in the Middle East of the 1st century AD. The great colonnaded street, corresponding to the ancient *decumanus*, starting at the temple and leading to the rest of the ancient city, it has a monumental arch, early 3rd century AD, and rich decorations. The remains of the Temple of Nabu with its podium; and the baths of Diocletian. The theatre, the second most noteworthy edifice in Palmyra, dated early 1st century AD. The Temple of Ba'al-Shamin, erected in 17 AD and later expanded under the reign of Odenathus, with a notable portico.

Valley of the Tombs, outside the ancient walls of Palmyra, a series of large-scale funerary monuments, almost a mile-long necropolis, with a series of large edifices with rich decorations.

Palmyra Museum, housing a magnificent collection of rare objects relating the evolution of art and sculpture in Palmyra, decorated busts and sarcophagi, sculptures regarded by archaeologists as the best pieces of Palmyrene art.

The Arabic fort, this legendary fortress offers a sublime panoramic view to admire the sun set over the oasis of Palmyra and the sites of this ancient city relating the magnificence of its past, that we will have visited during the day.

Dinner and overnight stay at the 5-star luxury Dedeman Hotel in Palmyra.

Friday, June 3: Krak des Chevaliers – Serjilla – Aleppo

Krak des Chevaliers, one of the most important preserved medieval military castles in the world, a jewel of military architecture, described by T. E. Lawrence as "perhaps the best preserved and most wholly admirable castle in the world", a UNESCO World Heritage Site, originally built in 1031 for the emir of Aleppo, captured by the Crusaders in 1099, and expanded between 1150 and 1250.

Serjilla, originally built for a prosperous community, it is one of the best preserved of the Dead Cities among the 800 villages, towns and rural settlements dating from the 2nd to the 7th century in the countryside of Antioch, the historical capital of Syria during the Byzantine period.

Arrival at the 5-star, luxury hotel Beit Salahieh, in the ancient city of Aleppo, for our two-night stay. Dinner of fine cuisine on the rooftop terrace overlooking the Citadel of Aleppo.

Saturday, June 4: Saint Simeon – Aleppo

St. Simeon, one of the most remarkable historical sites of Byzantine Syria, an ancient pilgrimage dedicated to the memory of the monk who took retreat atop the 18-meter-high pillar to live in prayer, attracting crowds who came from afar to hear him preach. The remains of the pillar stand amidst the well-preserved 5th century Church of St. Simeon, built in his memory, encompassing over 5,000 square meters, including four basilicas, a monastery, and hostels.

Aleppo, one of the oldest inhabited and best preserved cities in the world, the end of the Silk Road, and the largest city in Syria, with its distinct identity, rich architecture and traditional heritage. Dating back to the second millennium BC, Aleppo is the latest coveted destination of international elites and aesthetes and a UNESCO World Heritage Site,

Luncheon at the palace of Joseph Achkar and Michel Charrière. With the same attention to historical detail that they dedicated to their 18th century Byblos residence, our hosts are currently restoring a palace in the medieval center of Aleppo, considered the most important palace in all of Syria. The complex of buildings dates from the 14th to the 16th centuries, and includes Mamluk elements contemporary with the famous Bimaristan Arghan located next door.

Bimaristan Argun, one of Aleppo’s most enchanting buildings, dating from the 14th century, converted from a residence into an asylum until last century, where the patients were treated by water and music therapy.

Citadel of Aleppo, a massive medieval castle in the center of ancient Aleppo, built on a mound rising 150 feet above the city, the fortress dates back to the 1st millennium BC, with much of the current structure from the 13th century.

Aleppo's Souqs and Khans, locally known as the *Medina*, the largest covered bazaar in the world, dating back to the 14th century, one of the greatest of the East, extending over 30 acres, with enchanting shop facades, captivating imported goods, raw silk from Iran, spices and dyes from India, as well as local products such as leather, jewelry, wool, cotton, copper, agricultural products, soap, and traditional handicrafts...a mesmerizing experience.

Farewell Evening reception with Georges Antaki, Honorary Consul of the Portuguese Consulate, Aleppo, and Myriam Antaki, Honorary Consul of the Italian Consulate, Aleppo, at the beautiful residence, housing an impressive collection of Oriental and Islamic art and artifacts.

Sunday, June 5: Departure

Our significant program ends officially after breakfast, when we shall bid each other "Au Revoir". Please see suggested flights below (at cost to participant). Guests can stay longer, and arrangements can be made at the hotel.

Tour Price: Land Cost: \$6,000 per person based on double occupancy; \$750 single supplement applies; based on a minimum of 15 participants (maximum 18 participants); an exchange rate of \$1.33/1 Euro; and a fully tax-deductible \$500 donation to ICA&CA.

Rate includes: 8.5 days of private visits and receptions; 9 nights of accommodation in 5-star luxury boutique hotels; all breakfasts, all luncheons, cocktail receptions, and 8 dinners; costs involved in the program, transport to and from events during the tour in an air-conditioned, luxury coach, architectural historians, etc.

For more information and to reserve, please call and email Pamela Huntington Darling at your earliest convenience. Tel.: Paris: 011 33 1 45 67 62 81. Email: pdarling@exclusiveculturaltours.com .

To assure availability, please reply before January 30th. Reservations will be treated according to their reception.

Members of ICA&CA at the Contributor or Individual ~ Professional level or higher are welcome to attend our tours. Members at the Patron-level and higher receive Priority Registration E-alerts. Join today or call (212) 730-9646, extension 104 to upgrade your membership.

Due to the exceptional character of certain private visits and receptions proposed in this program, to which access is highly exclusive, if a venue is cancelled by the host, it will be replaced by one of equal quality, and guests will be notified.

Suggested flights (at cost to participant):

Thursday, May 26: New York: 6:50 pm – Beirut: 3:50 pm, Friday, May 27 (14 hrs.); American Airlines 6139 & BMI 903; Correspondence: London.

Sunday, June 5: Aleppo: 8:15 am – New York: 4:15 pm (15 hrs.); Royal Jordanian Airlines 438 & American Airlines 7199; Correspondence: Amman. Hotel arrangements can be made for those wishing to arrive earlier and/or stay later.

