



REPUBLIC OF LEBANON
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT



SUSTAINABLE TOURISM STRATEGY FOR THE MOUNTAINS OF LEBANON

Strategy & Action Plan

LIST OF ACRONYMS

DGA	Directorate General of Antiquities
DMO	Destination Marketing Organization
IBA	Important Bird Areas
IPA	Important Plant Areas
KBA	Key Biodiversity Areas
KPI	Key Performance Indicators
KSA	Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
LMT	Lebanon Mountain Trail
LMTA	Lebanon Mountain Trail Association
MoA	Ministry of Agriculture
MoE	Ministry of Environment
MoT	Ministry of Tourism
PA	Protected Areas
STSMML	Sustainable Tourism Strategy for the Mountains of Lebanon
TIF	Trade Investment Facilitation
TTCI	Travel and Tourism Competitive Index
UNAID	United States Agency for International Development

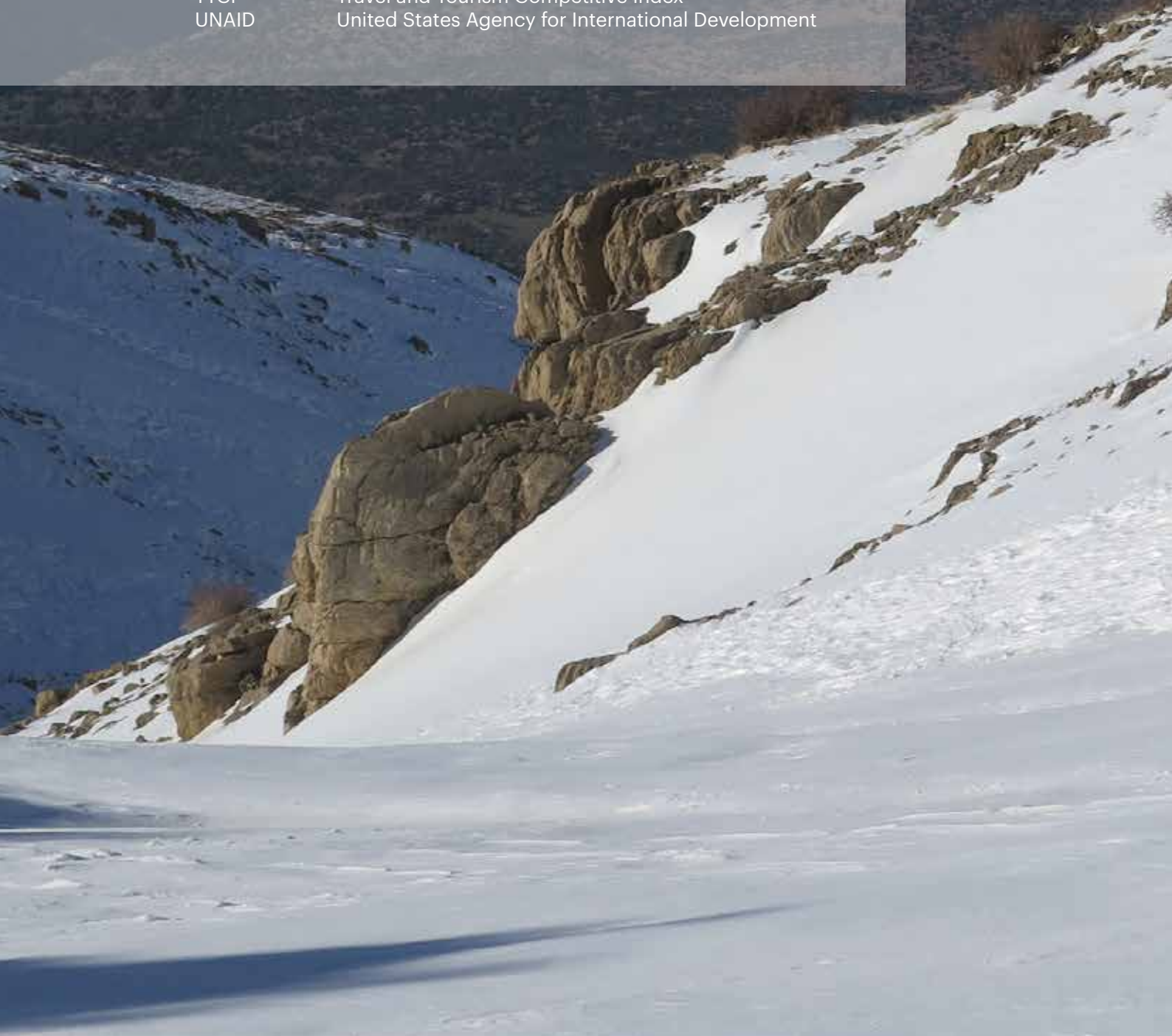


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Sustainable Tourism Strategy for Mountains of Lebanon (STSML)

Part One

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This document consists of an executive summary of the current situation of tourism in the mountain areas of Lebanon, considering zones 500 meters and higher, followed by a tourism development strategy and action plan, including the vision, objectives, and key areas of intervention.

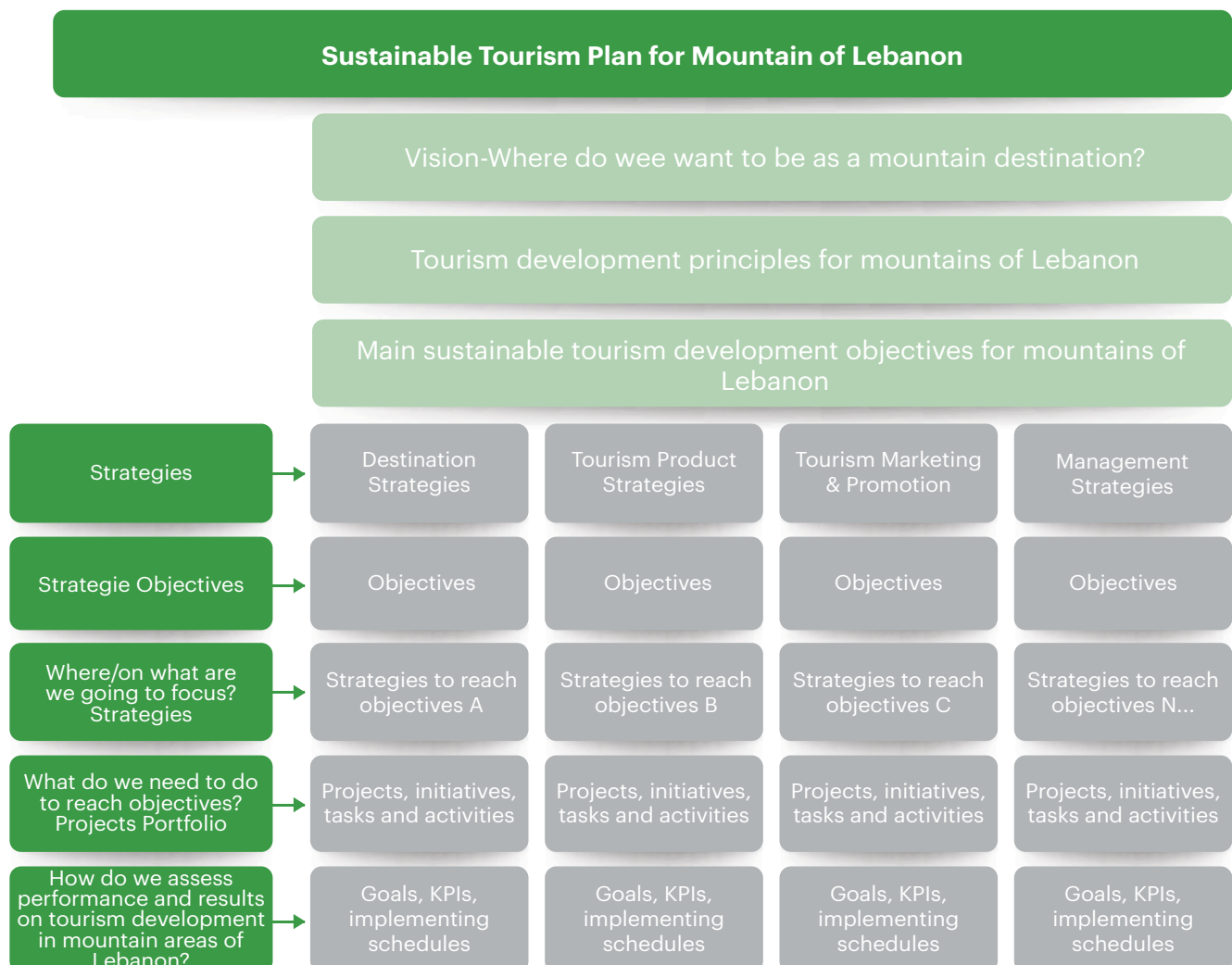
The first part of the plan is about diagnostics. There are already many documents and reports about tourism in Lebanon, as well as other reports that have an indirect link with the tourism sector of the country. To avoid repeating documents and data, this part of the Sustainable Tourism Strategy for Mountains of Lebanon (STSML) will identify the most relevant insights that have a direct effect on the traveller's experience and on the performance of the destination (in particular) and of the Lebanese

tourism industry (more generally). This will allow the industry to set new strategic directions and to undertake new initiatives to respond proactively to the main findings of this report.

The second part of the STSML address the tourism vision foreseen for the mountain areas of the country (what we want to be as a tourism destination in the future), as well as tourism development principles, objectives, strategies, and projects that need to be followed to achieve that vision.

The overall plan is structured following a conceptual approach as described in the example below. The final strategy will then be adjusted according to the specificities of the destination:

Figure 1 – Conceptual structure for the Sustainable Tourism Plan



2. TOURISM SECTOR OVERVIEW IN LEBANON

This section presents an overview of the tourism sector in Lebanon (mostly prior to the Covid-19 pandemics) and its main socio-economic indicators, followed by a general description of the international traveller's behaviour at a particular destination; an analysis of the competitiveness of Lebanon as a tourist destination according to the TRAVELSAT® Competitive Index; and finally a brief study about the impact of Covid-19 in Lebanon and its potential consequences and opportunities in the short and medium term.

12.1 Socio-economic indicators

Tourism in Lebanon Accounts for 18 per cent of Total GDP and Generates more than 435,000 Jobs (19 per cent of Total Employment)

Travel and tourism total contribution to GDP reached \$10.4 billion in 2018 and generated 394,300 jobs. The tourism sector plays a very important role in Lebanon, both for economic development and for job creation compared to both the regional and

global average. However, in recent years the growth rate of that contribution has been lower (and even negative) in Lebanon compared to the regional and world averages.

Figure 2. Tourism Direct Contribution to GDP (2019)

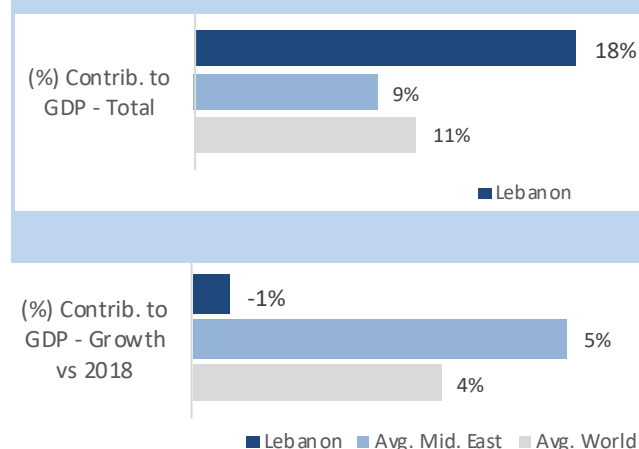
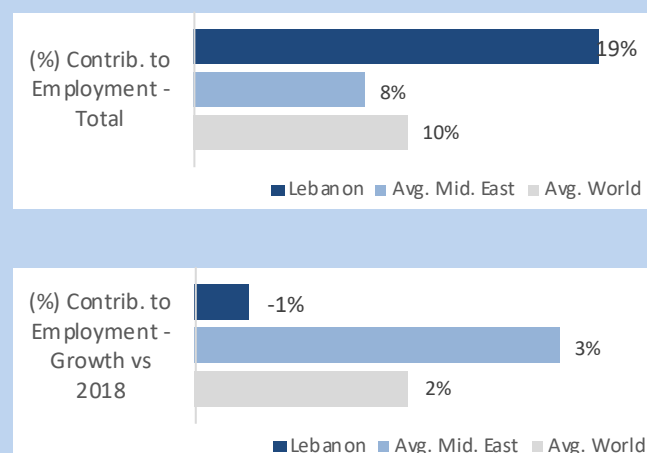


Figure 3. Tourism Contribution to Employment



Source: Travel and Tourism Economic Impact 2020 – Lebanon World Travel and Tourism Council.

Note: 2020 has not been considered due to bias caused by the Covid19- outbreak.

Of all countries in the Middle East, Lebanon has the Second-Highest Dependence on Tourism for its Economic Development and Employment Creation

The average employment creation (18 per cent) and tourism contribution to GDP in Lebanon (19 per cent) is much greater than the average of Middle East countries. This fact reflects the importance that the tourism sector has always had in Lebanon. At the same time, however, it also implies the lack of a more

diverse economy, and one that is highly dependent on the arrival of international tourists.

Figure 4. Travel contribution to GDP in Middle East countries (%) – 2018

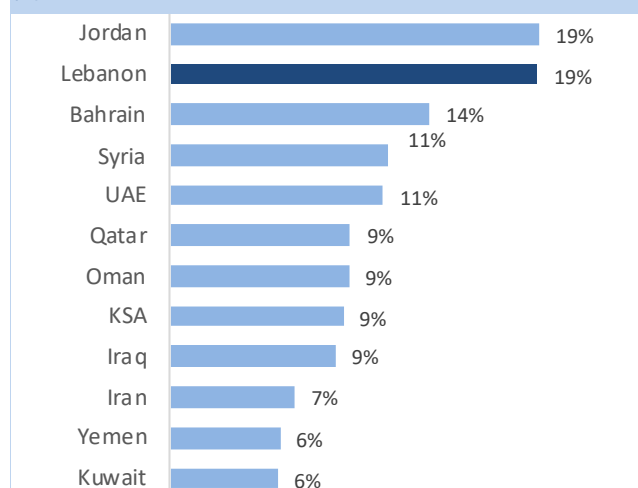
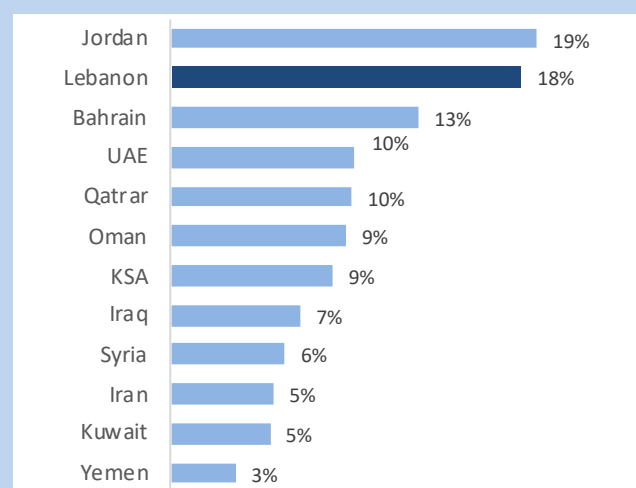


Figure 5. Travel contribution to employment in Middle East countries (%) – 2018



Source: Tourism Sector in Lebanon – 2019 Factbook. – Investment Development Authority of Lebanon (IDAL)

12.2 International tourist arrivals

A Recovery of International Tourism was Interrupted by the Pandemic and was Further Threatened by Regional Political Instability

International tourist arrivals in Lebanon totalled 1.9 million in 2019, a figure that comes very close to the record number of 2.1 million achieved in 2010. Despite the political instability of the region, the sector has been witnessing a double-digit average annual growth rate of 10 per cent since 2014.

However, the number of tourist arrivals in Lebanon fell to below 200,000 in the first half of 2020, compared to more than 923,000 in the same period the previous year, as the coronavirus pandemic forced the main airport to close.

Figure 6. International tourist arrivals (2010–2020)



Source: World Tourism Organization – Yearbook of Tourism Statistics and Ministry of Tourism (2020 data).

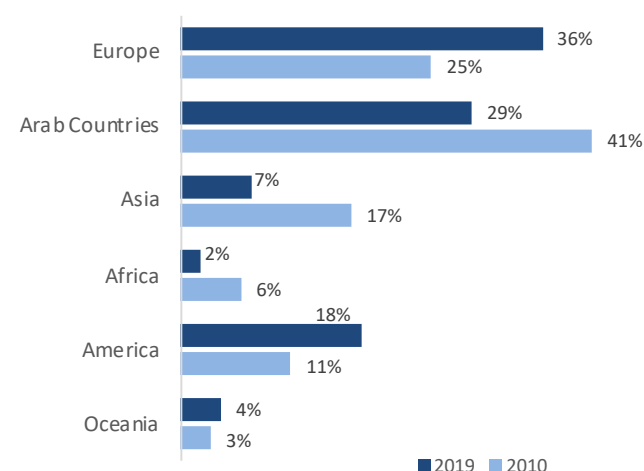
Note: 2020 accounts only for the first half of the year.

More than a Third of International Tourists in Lebanon come from Europe

European tourists accounted for 36 per cent of international tourist arrivals in 2019, led by France (9 per cent) and Germany (5 per cent). Over the period 2010–2019, arrivals from Europe increased by 10 per cent, while arrivals from Arab Countries, which have traditionally been the largest source market, decreased by 12 percentage points.

In terms of arrivals by country, the top five source markets account for almost half of the total international tourism demand: Iraq (12 per cent), United States (9 per cent) France (9 per cent), Canada (6 per cent), and Germany (5 per cent).

Figure 7. Arrivals by region (2010–2019)



Source: Tourism Sector in Lebanon – 2019 Factbook. Investment Development Authority of Lebanon (IDAL).

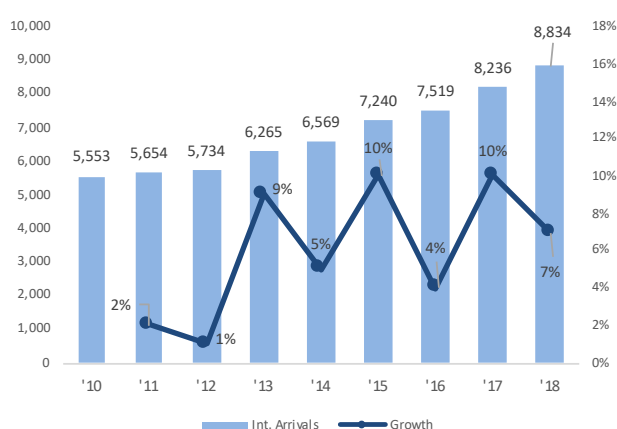
Note: 2020 has not been considered due to bias caused by the Covid-19 outbreak.

The airport has reached its maximum capacity and is planned to be expanded

The number of airport passengers in Lebanon increased from 5.5 million in 2010 to 8.8 million in 2018, despite the repercussions of the outbreak of war in Syria in 2011 and other political events that caused regional instability.

Current airport facilities are reaching overcapacity since they are equipped to handle only up to 6 million passengers per year. Consequently, the Beirut Rafic Hariri International Airport was set to start expanding by the end of 2019, but Covid-19 delayed the beginning of the project. This expansion is expected to increase annual passenger capacity from 6 million to 20 million by 2030.

Figure 8. Total passengers at Beirut International Airport (2010–2018)



Source: World Tourism Organization – Yearbook of Tourism Statistics and Ministry of Tourism (2020).

In terms of connectivity, Beirut Hariri International Airport is connected by direct flights with more than ≈50 airports, mainly in Europe (≈30), the Middle East (≈15), and Africa (≈5). Western and Northern European countries have daily direct flight connectivity with Beirut and their capital cities, and such main European source markets as France and Germany together have four airports offering direct-flight connectivity with Beirut.

12.3 International tourism revenues

Lebanon accounts for 11 per cent of tourism receipts in the middle east, with only 3 per cent of total international tourist arrivals in the region

Lebanon remains the fourth country in the region in terms of total tourism spending (11 per cent of total Middle East), while it only receives 3 per cent of the total number of tourists in the region. This is mainly because it is still one of the destinations with the highest spending per traveller in the world.

However, since 2011 socio-political instability next to the Lebanese borders has decreased tourism demand from Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, which has directly affected the amount of tourism receipts.

On the other hand, Saudi Arabia (KSA) and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) have become the main destinations in terms of tourism demand and spending in the Middle East. Their role in the region has been accentuated in recent years because of a major tourism campaign focused on leisure (UAE) and investment in the development of new destinations focused on exclusive tourism (KSA).

Figure 9. Distribution of international tourism arrivals (2019)

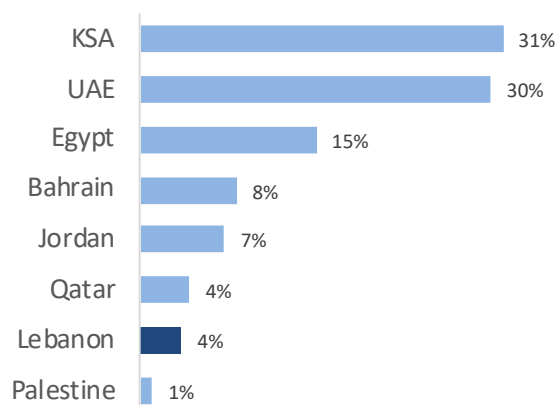
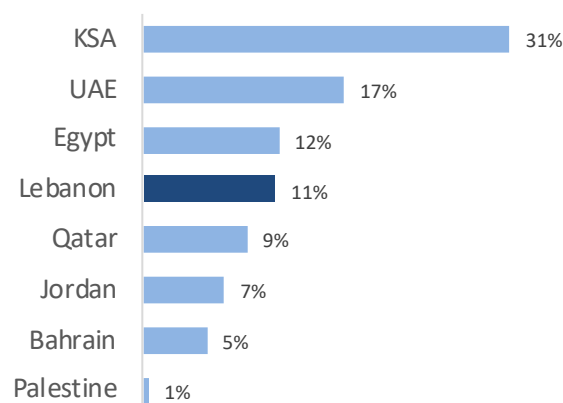


Figure 10. Distribution of international tourism receipts (2019)

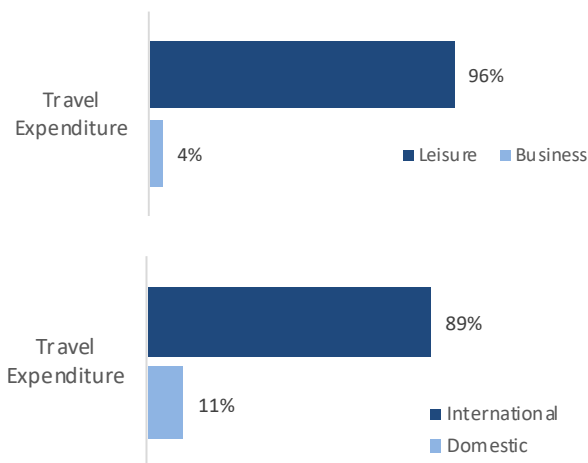


Source: Tourism Sector in Lebanon – 2019 Factbook. Investment Development Authority of Lebanon (IDAL).

Travel expenditure in Lebanon comes mainly from international leisure tourists

International travel spending generated 89 per cent of direct travel contribution to Lebanese GDP, compared with 11 per cent for domestic expenditure. On the other hand, leisure travel receipts accounted for 96 per cent of total tourism expenditure in Lebanon in 2019, compared with only 4 per cent of business travel, which remains a niche market. This is a good point for developing mountain tourism in Lebanon, since there is a strong international market that could be interested in the leisure offerings of these destinations. That said, the contribution of business travel is expected to grow during 2021–2028 as the country embarks on an infrastructure rehabilitation programme to attract foreign investors and businesses.

Figure 11. Travel and tourism expenditure (2019)



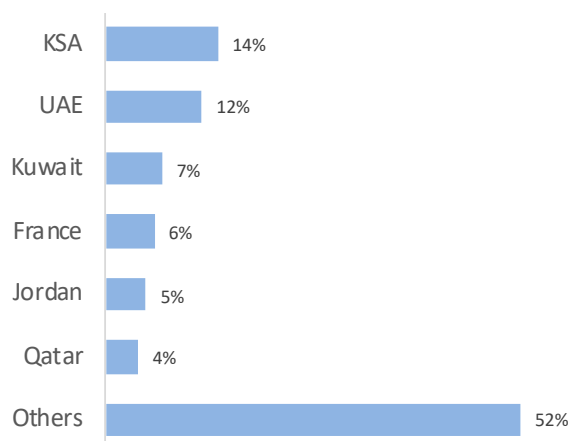
Source: Travel and Tourism Economic Impact 2020 – Lebanon
World Travel and Tourism Council.

Gcc tourists are the largest spenders in lebanon, but its contribution is decreasing

Saudi Arabian nationals recorded the largest share of spending in Lebanon (14 per cent), followed by the UAE (12 per cent) and Kuwait (7 per cent). Most tourist expenditures took place in Beirut and were generated by the luxury fashion clothing and jewellery retail and manufacturing industries.

Gulf tourists have historically been the largest spenders, but year-on-year (YoY) spending by tourists coming from KSA, UAE, Kuwait, and Qatar registered the lowest number for the last 10 years in 2018 (39 per cent of total expenditure), compared with 51 per cent in 2009.

Figure 12. Tourist spending in lebanon by market (2016)



Source: Global Blue Report – Ten Years in Review in Spending Behaviour for Tourist in Lebanon.

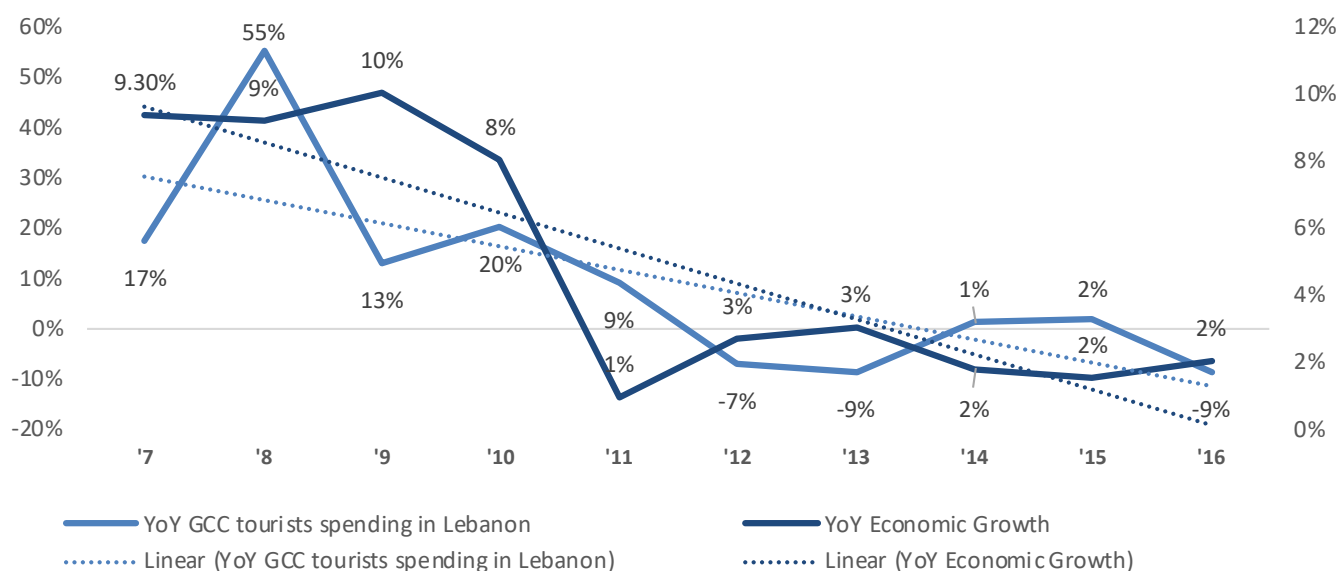


The yoy evolution of gcc spending in lebanon has a strong correlation with annual economic growth in the country

Figure 13 shows a high correlation between the annual decline in GCC traveller spending in Lebanon and the country's economic recession. This correlation shows how much the spending of tourists from

Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, and Qatar directly affect the total tourist spending in Lebanon, and consequently have a direct impact on the country's annual economic growth.

Figure 13. Correlation between yoy % variation of gcc tourist spending in lebanon and economic growth (2007–2016)



Source: global blue report – ten years in review in spending behaviour for tourist in lebanon (2007–2016).

Although the number of tourists coming to Lebanon averaged a 2 per cent compound annual growth rate over the last nine years (except for 2020), according to the Lebanese Ministry for Tourism, total tourism expenditure and contribution to GDP is not growing at the same pace, since demand growth is driven by nationalities that have a lower spending

in the country compared with the spending of GCC tourists. However, emergent source markets (i.e., Europe) represent an opportunity to increase tourism spending by creating an attractive portfolio of tourism experiences across the country and by enhancing the offer of accommodation and other services according to their needs.

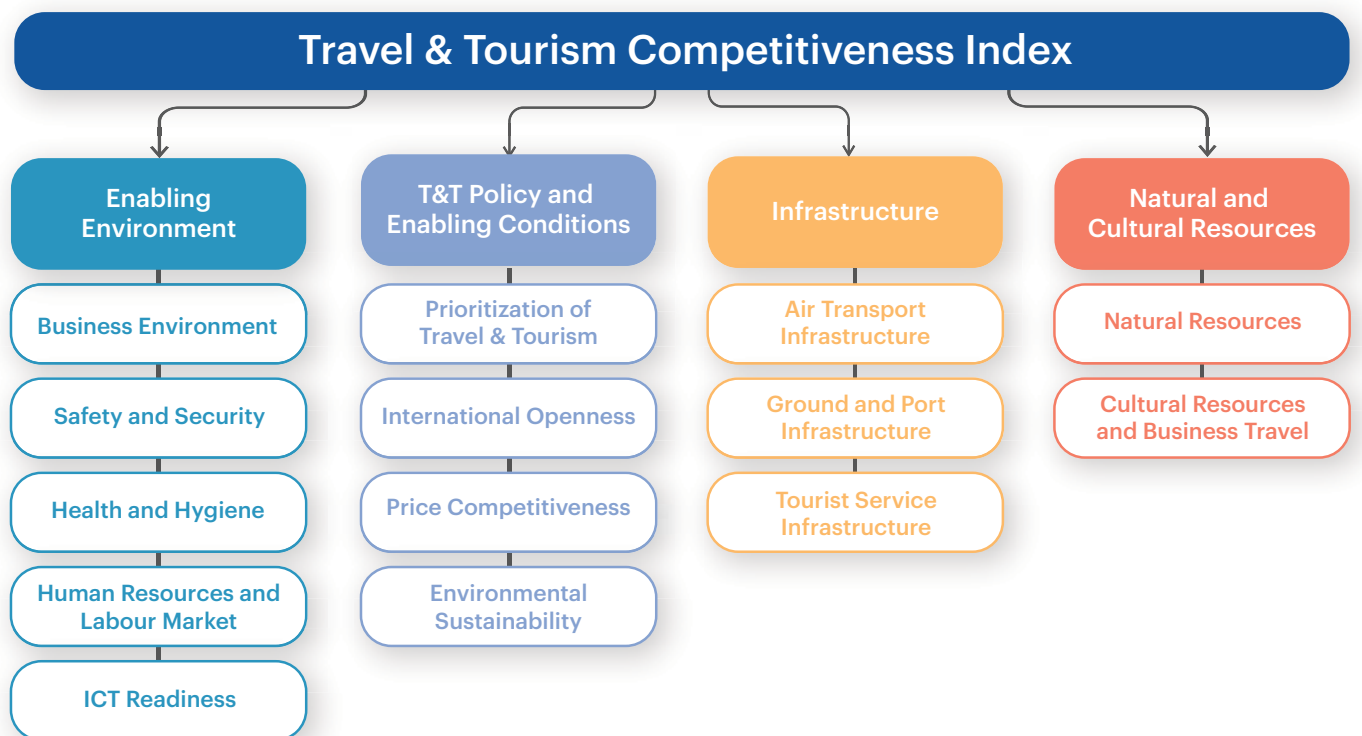
12.4 Destination's value chain competitiveness – travel and tourism (T&T) competitive index

Introduction and methodology

The Travel and Tourism Competitive Index (TTCI) benchmarks the competitiveness of 140 economies and measures the set of factors and policies that enable the sustainable development of the tourism sector. The index is comprised of the following four sub-indexes and 14 pillars:

Each pillar is built by individual indicators (90 in total), analysed with statistical data from international organizations and qualitative inputs from the World Economic Forum's annual Executive Opinion Survey. The indicators for each pillar can be found in the following link.

Figure 14. T&T competitiveness index framework (2019)



Lebanon's competitive index 2019 and ranking

Lebanon is positioned 100th out of the 140 countries that take part in the TTCI, with a score of 3.4 out of 10 points. Even though its score has improved compared to the past two years, the growth rate has been slower than the global average, and therefore its

position in the general ranking has gone down from the 96th to the 100th position. Nowadays, Lebanon's competitiveness score as a touristic destination is 12 per cent lower than the global average.

Figure 15. T&T competitiveness index lebanon (2019)

Rank	Country	Score	Rank vs 2017	Score vs 2017	Diff from global score (%)
99	Guatemala	3.4	-13 (86)	-3,2 (6,6)	-11,8%
100	LEBANON	3.4	-4 (96)	+0,3 (3,1)	-12,1%
101	North Macedonia	3.4	-12 (89)	-3,8 (7,2)	-12,7%

Source: World Economic Forum, 2019

Comparing Lebanon's competitiveness index with the rest of the EMEA (Europe, Middle East, and Africa) countries, it can be observed that it has the third-worst score, above only Algeria and Yemen. On the

other hand, it should be noted that Qatar and UAE global position (33 and 51, respectively) are 15–20 per cent higher compared to the average of the region.

Figure 16. T&T competitiveness index – lebanon and middle east (2019)

Global Rank	Economy	Score	DIFFERENCE FROM 2017		SCORE DIFF. FROM BENCHMARK AVG.	
			Rank	Score Growth (%)	Regional (%)	Global (%)
33	United Arab Emirates	4.4	-4.0	-1.3%	20.5	15.3
51	Qatar	4.1	-4.0	1.5%	12.4	7.5
57	Israel	4.0	4.0	3.6%	8.3	3.5
58	Oman	4.0	8.0	5.1%	8.1	3.4
64	Bahrain	3.9	-5.0	0.4%	6.2	1.5
65	Egypt	3.9	9.0	7.0%	5.9	1.3
66	Morocco	3.9	-1.0	2.2%	5.9	1.2
69	Saudi Arabia	3.9	-6.0	1.4%	5.3	0.7
84	Jordan	3.6	-9.0	-1.2%	-2.5	-6.7
85	Tunisia	3.6	2.0	2.4%	-2.5	-6.8
89	Iran, Islamic Rep.	3.5	4.0	3.4%	-3.7	-7.9
96	Kuwait	3.4	4.0	2.7%	-7.1	-11.1
100	Lebanon	3.4	-3.0	0.3%	-8.1	-12.1
116	Algeria	3.1	3.0	2.5%	-14.5	-18.2
140	Yemen	2.4	-4.0	-0.9%	-34.3	-37.2

Source: World Economic Forum, 2019.

The detailed analysis of the various components of the TCI as shown in **Figure 17** allows us to identify which are the main aspects in which Lebanon has

a higher score and competitiveness rate than the first percentile and which are those in which it should improve to increase its competitiveness.

Figure 17. T&T competitiveness score by pillar – lebanon and middle east (2019)

Global Rank	Economy	ENABLING ENVIRONMENT					T&T POLICY & ENABLING CONDITIONS				INFRASTRUCTURE			NATURAL & CULT. RESOURCES	
		Business Environment	Safety & Security	Health & Hygiene	Human Resources & Labor Market	ICT Readiness	Prioritization of T&T	Int'l Openness	Price Competitiveness	Environ. Sustainability	Air Transport Infrastructure	Ground & Port Infrastructure	Tourist Service Infrastructure	Natural Resources	Cultural Res. & Business Travel
33	United Arab Emirates	4.8	5.3	5.4	5.3	4.8	4.7	3.0	5.5	4.5	3.3	4.5	3.6	2.4	2.2
51	Qatar	4.8	5.3	5.3	5.1	5.6	4.4	3.5	3.0	4.4	3.0	4.2	5.0	1.8	1.4
57	Israel	5.2	5.5	6.0	5.5	5.5	5.0	2.5	3.6	4.3	3.6	4.4	3.2	2.3	1.7
58	Oman	4.3	5.5	5.3	4.6	5.3	4.7	2.8	5.7	4.4	3.4	4.4	4.1	2.3	2.0
64	Bahrain	5.4	5.9	5.2	4.9	5.3	4.5	2.9	3.8	4.1	3.5	3.2	4.6	1.8	1.2
69	Saudi Arabia	5.2	5.6	5.7	4.6	5.2	4.6	3.6	3.5	4.0	4.1	3.5	5.1	1.9	1.9
84	Jordan	4.6	5.7	5.4	4.0	4.8	5.1	3.3	5.3	4.3	2.7	2.9	3.8	2.2	1.3
89	Iran, Islamic Rep.	3.8	5.4	5.0	4.1	4.5	3.7	2.4	3.2	3.9	2.5	3.1	2.8	2.4	2.8
96	Kuwait	4.7	5.8	5.6	4.3	5.5	3.6	3.6	5.6	4.0	2.6	3.3	3.9	1.8	1.1
100	Lebanon	4.0	4.6	5.6	3.9	4.1	5.0	2.5	5.5	4.1	2.5	2.8	4.0	2.0	1.4
140	Yemen	3.5	3.2	4.1	3.0	2.4	2.1	1.3	3.0	3.4	1.2	2.0	1.0	1.8	1.3
Middle East Average		4.8	5.6	5.3	4.5	5.1	4.3	2.5	5.6	4.1	3.3	3.7	4.2	2.1	1.7

Source: world economic forum (2019)

Pillars where Lebanon's competitiveness is low (ranked in the bottom 20 per cent) are as follows:

- **Business Environment:** This pillar captures the extent to which a country has in place a policy environment conducive for companies to do business. Areas to improve Lebanon's competitiveness in this pillar include:
 - Facilitate foreign direct investment
 - Reduce the cost and time necessary to deal with construction permits, which directly affects T&T development
 - Ensure a safe and stable socio-political environment
- **Safety and Security:** These are critical factors for determining the competitiveness of a country's T&T industry. Tourists are likely to be deterred from travelling to dangerous countries or regions, making it less attractive to develop the T&T sector. Initiatives suggested to improve Lebanon's competitiveness in this pillar include:
 - Mitigate the impact of regional terrorism and geopolitical conflicts and make efforts to change the perception of instability in the country, especially in international source markets.
 - Provide support to police services to ensure protection from crime.
- **Human Resources and Labour Market:** The components of this pillar measure how well countries develop skills through education and training and enhance the best allocation of those skills through an efficient labour market. Actions to improve Lebanon's competitiveness in this pillar include:
 - Increase formal educational attainment rates and private sector involvement in upgrading human resources, such as business investment in training services and customer care.
 - Increase flexibility, efficiency, and openness of the labour market, and the participation of women, to assess the depth of the country's talent pool and its ability to allocate human resources to their best use.
- **Natural Resources:** This pillar analyses the number of UNESCO natural World Heritage Sites, a measure of the quality of the natural environment that proxies the beauty of its landscape, the richness of its fauna, and the percentage of nationally protected areas (e.g., national parks and nature reserves). Some initiatives to improve the score in this pillar, considering the potential of nature tourism in Lebanon, are:
 - Conduct environmental studies and declare more protected natural areas and national parks.
 - Improve the preservation of natural areas.

On the other hand, Lebanon has a positive score in 'Prioritization of Travel & Tourism', which

analyses the support and resources provided by the government to channel funds to essential development projects and to coordinate stakeholders to promote the development of the sector.

12.5 Brief revision of the covid-19 impact on the inbound market

Main indicators that show the impact of covid-19 in Lebanon

International mobility restrictions and border-closing measures by Lebanon (as by countries worldwide) starting in March 2020 caused an 89 per cent drop in the international tourism demand in 2020, which is reflected in Lebanon's sharp decline from 1.9 million international tourists in 2019 to fewer than 200,000 visitors in 2020. This decline resulted in a 73 per cent drop in total tourism revenues. As mentioned above, the tourism sector is essential for the social and economic development of the country, as it represents as much as 18 per cent of the GDP (2019). Consequently, the pandemic – combined with the country's economic, political, and social instability – caused a 64 per cent drop in the GDP per capita, from \$7.66 in 2019 to \$2.74 in 2020. The good news is that both GDP and tourism revenue fell in less proportion than the total number of visitors.

Figure 18. T&T Competitiveness Score by Pillar – Lebanon and Middle East (2019)

International Tourist Arrivals (2020 vs 2019)	Tourism Expenditure Growth (2020 vs 2019)	GDP per Capita Growth (2020 vs 2019)
-89%	-73%	-64%

Sources: Travel and Tourism Economic Impact 2020 – Lebanon World Travel and Tourism Council; and Ernst & Young – Credit Libanais Economic Research Unit (Dec. 2020).

A greater impact on Lebanon than in the rest of the middle east

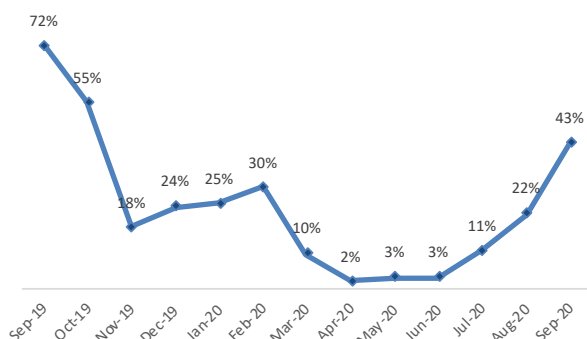
The following graphics referring to the hotel occupancy rate in Beirut represent how the pandemic has had a strong impact on the tourism industry, and at the same time how Lebanon has had a slower recovery compared to other major destinations in the region.

The first pandemic wave started at the beginning of April. The strong restrictions lasted until mid-August and early September, leaving behind the summer season with most of the hotels and services closed, leading to occupation taxes in Lebanon (and in the whole world) close to 0 per cent.

Finally, during the month of September Lebanon reduced the restrictions and started to notice a partial movement of visitors in the region, being able to reach a hotel occupancy rate of +40 per cent in Beirut, though it was far from the recorded 72 per cent of 2019.

Regarding the regional analysis, the following figure is based on a comparison of the average hotel occupancy rate in various Middle East touristic cities during the first nine months of 2020. Therefore, it compares the impact that Covid-19 had on each destination, the degree of recovery reached, and the variation of the demand.

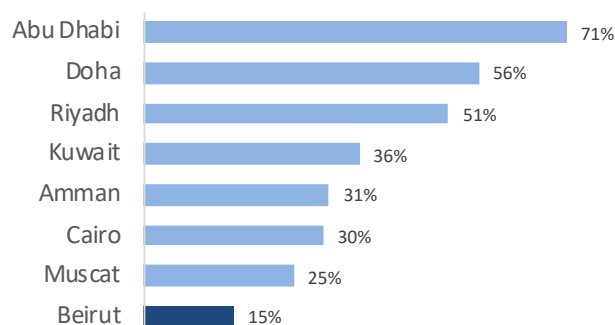
Figure 19. Hotel Occupancy Rate in Beirut (2020)



Source: Ernst & Young – Credit Libanais Economic Research Unit (Dec. 2020).

The graphic shows that some cities reached an average hotel occupancy rate higher than 50 per cent during the first nine months of 2020. This was mainly due to domestic/regional demand and the diversification of the leisure and business tourism. However, the average hotel occupancy rate in Lebanon until September was only around 15 per cent.

Figure 20. Hotel Occupancy Rate up to September (2020)



Source: Ernst & Young – Credit Libanais Economic Research Unit (Dec. 2020).

Conclusions

The main reasons for the pandemic's high impact on Lebanon and its slow recovery are the following:

- First, the higher dependence on international tourism, which represents nearly 89 per cent of all touristic revenue.
- Second, a greater dependence on tourism for economic revenues and employment creation, which has resulted into a social and economic crisis among the population.
- Finally, the existence of other economic and social factors affecting the development of the country, such as the current devaluation of the currency, the political instability of the Syrian region and its consequent increase in poverty, and the destruction of tourism infrastructure due to the Port Blast.

3 . DOMESTIC TOURISM MARKET

Potential of domestic tourism market to recover from covid-19

Domestic demand might be one of the main drivers for the recovery of the tourism sector in Lebanon, thanks to the lower sensitivity of the local traveller to situations of instability in the region; to the greater possibility and freedom to move freely throughout the territory without having to suffer restrictions on mobility due to Covid-19; and finally due the emerging need to disconnect and look for unspoiled, non-massified, and safe natural environments away from the main cities.

Covid-19 has also caused a paradigm change in the local traveller's habits. Prior to the pandemic, domestic travellers often travelled to international destinations to enjoy their holidays. However, the current situation

has revealed new opportunities for locals to discover the cultural heritage and natural surroundings offered in their home country. Therefore, data shows that 70 per cent of those living in Lebanon are now considering travel within the country for their next trip; and 48 per cent are not considering travel outside the country in the following 6–18 months.

A detailed analysis regarding the pandemic's impact on domestic tourism is presented below. The analyses have been developed based on the study "Lebanon's Economic Crisis and Covid-19 Impact on Domestic Tourism Market – Lebanese University," which is itself based on a sample of 400 surveys (with a 5 per cent margin of error).

13.1 Domestic tourist profile

Based on the Lebanese University study, it can be concluded that the domestic tourist in Lebanon is mainly young (between 26 and 45 years), lives in Beirut or in the peripheral area of Mount Lebanon, has an

advanced education level, mainly works in the private sector, and earns around 2,500,000 to 5,500,000 LBP monthly. (At the time the study was conducted the USD to LBP exchange rate was USD 1 equivalent to LBP 1,600.)

Figure 21. Profile of the domestic traveller in Lebanon

Age	Residence	Education	Professional Profile	Monthly Income
66%	90%	94%	67%	51%
From 26 to 45 years	Live in Beirut and Mount Lebanon	Higher education degree	Work in private sector or self-employed	Income between 2,500,000 and 5,500,000 LBP

Source: Lebanon's economic crisis and covid-19 impact on domestic tourism market – Lebanese university – faculty of tourism and hospitality management (July 2020).

This sociodemographic study also notes the following:

- Only 15 per cent of the touristic demand is older than 46 years.
- 12 per cent of local potential travellers do not have a stable monthly income due to economic difficulties.
- 38 per cent of potential domestic travellers have a monthly income lower than 2,500,000 LBP. At the time of the survey that amount exchanged for \$1,600, but with the sharp devaluation starting in 2020 until now (January 2022), that LBP is equivalent to less than \$100. So, the purchasing power of most Lebanese has decreased drastically.
- 61 per cent of the survey respondents declared that their purchasing power has decreased due to the pandemic and the current socio-economic crisis in Lebanon.

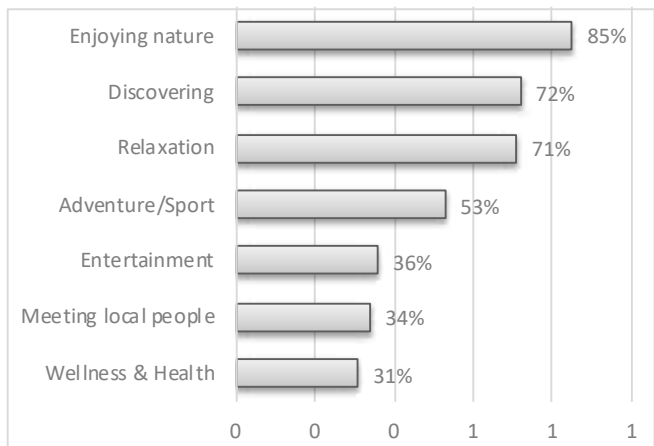
13.2 Domestic travel purpose

The following section details the ‘pull’ and ‘push’ factors for Lebanon’s domestic market when planning a trip, their travel motivations, and what they value and consider when choosing their next destination.

Driving actors that motivate domestic travellers to travel after covid-19

On the one hand, the primary driver of domestic tourism is the desire to enjoy nature as well as to discover new places and to relax during holidays. Inland Lebanon and its mountains can satisfy the needs of local visitors by providing experiences that allow them to discover and enjoy the natural surroundings of these areas combined with high standards of accommodations and services. Even though the study makes no mention of hunting and fowling, Lebanese have a strong tradition of chase.

Figure 22. Travel motivations



Source: Lebanon’s Economic Crisis and Covid-19 Impact on Domestic Tourism Market – Lebanese University – Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality Management (July 2020).

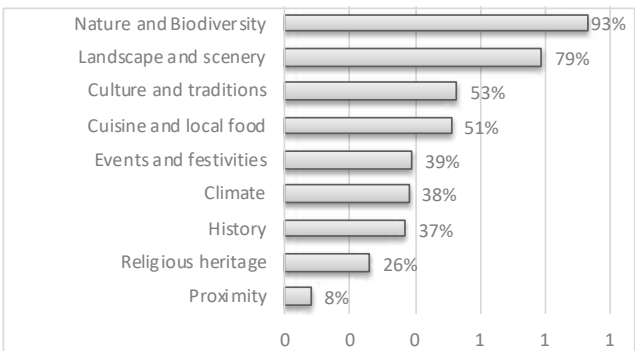
On the other hand, the domestic traveller is less interested in cultural experiences and being in touch with local people. Local people, although with cultural differences and traditions, are not as exotic and attractive for co-nationals. The same applies to the country’s cultural heritage. Both drivers are familiar to the domestic market. Nationals are accustomed to seeing those assets on a regular basis, and thus they are perceived as being less attractive. Therefore, the mountain areas are particularly active tourism destinations – a place where one can enjoy nature-based experiences, but places that will require specific development.

Destination characteristics that attract the visitor

The main attraction factors of a destination for the domestic tourist are its nature, its biodiversity, and its landscapes. Aspects such as cultural or gastronomic offerings are secondary factors, while other aspects such as geographical proximity, religious heritage, and climate are much less relevant. This does not

mean that they are not important as tourism assets, but they are not the main drivers of domestic tourism.

Figure 23. Preferred features of a destination



Source: Lebanon’s Economic Crisis and Covid-19 Impact on Domestic Tourism Market – Lebanese University – Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality Management (July 2020).

These are, of course, assets that will enhance a tourist’s experience once at the destination. Domestic markets do enjoy and appreciate culture and traditions, as well as local food, as part of their whole leisure experience. Lebanon’s mountain destinations have great potential to attract the domestic market, as they offer the most highly desired characteristics and can fulfil a traveller’s many needs and preferences.

13.3 Domestic travel behaviour and preferences

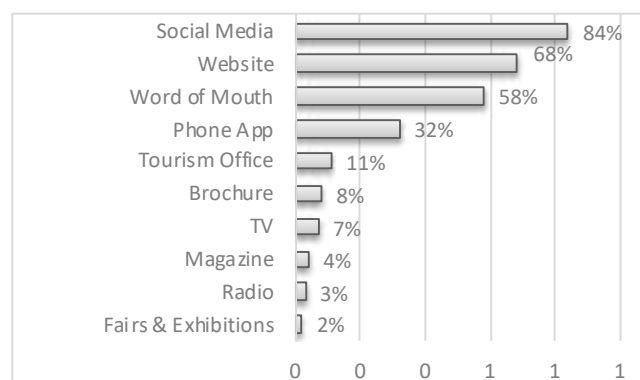
The following section details Lebanon’s domestic travellers’ expected behaviour, including how they will organize their trip, how many days they want to travel in the country, with whom they prefer to travel, and what are their favourite accommodations.

Sources of inspiration for domestic tourists

Online channels are the main source of inspiration, discovery, and information for the domestic traveller in Lebanon. Some 84 per cent of travellers are inspired through social media and 68 per cent through web pages, including the promotional materials of various destinations (e.g., websites) and external blogs or landing pages.

At the same time, more than half of all travellers follow the advice of friends and relatives to find ideas for their next trips. Finally, traditional offline channels (TV, radio, magazines, etc.) play a residual role in inspiring travellers.

Figure 24. Preferred sources of inspiration information

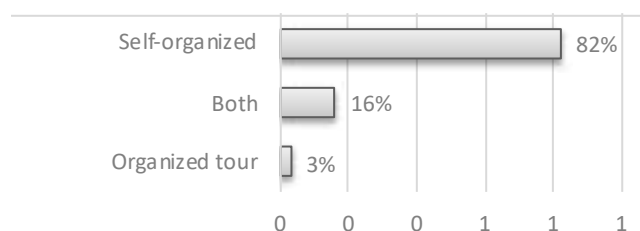


Source: Lebanon's Economic Crisis and Covid-19 Impact on Domestic Tourism Market – Lebanese University – Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality Management (July 2020).

Trip organization

Regarding the trip's organization, 82 per cent of the domestic demand prefers to organize the trip by themselves, rather than to buy a package holiday. This is due to the domestic traveller's significant knowledge of the destination (compared with foreign visitors), a lower perception of risk and insecurity, and the willingness to reduce the intermediary costs.

Figure 25. Trip organization

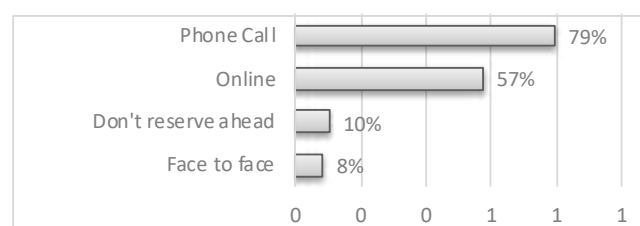


Source: Lebanon's Economic Crisis and Covid-19 Impact on Domestic Tourism Market – Lebanese University – Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality Management (July 2020).

Preferred reservation channel

Even though most inspiration and information channels are mainly online, the travel booking method is still mostly offline. Some 79 per cent of the survey respondents said they prefer to book by phone, and 8 per cent in-person when at their destination. Only 57 per cent make their reservation online, primarily due to the lack of digitalization in Lebanon's tourism sector.

Figure 26. Preferred reservation channels



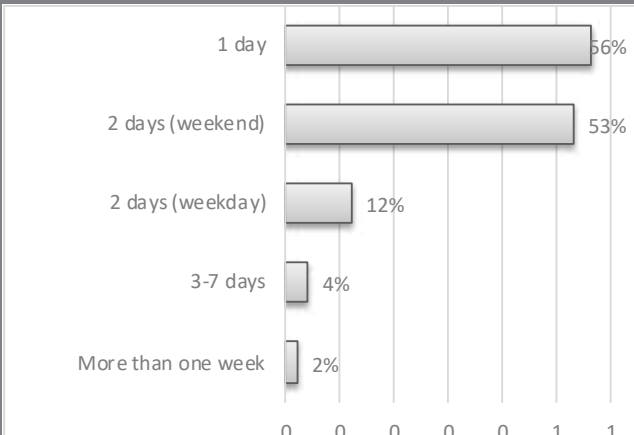
Source: Lebanon's Economic Crisis and Covid-19 Impact on Domestic Tourism Market – Lebanese University – Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality Management (July 2020).



Average expected duration of next trips inside Lebanon

Lebanon is a country with a wide variety of landscapes and environments located within short distances of each other. This allows tourists to travel from Beirut to almost anywhere in the country in a single day. Consequently, many of the domestic trips are of short duration. More than half of all travellers (56 per cent) plan to take one-day trips, and 65 per cent plan to take two days. Only 4 per cent plan to make a trip of between three and four days, and only 2 per cent of more than a week. Another factor that may influence the decision to shorten the duration of a trip is the recent decline in the domestic purchasing power.

Figure 27. Average duration of domestic trips

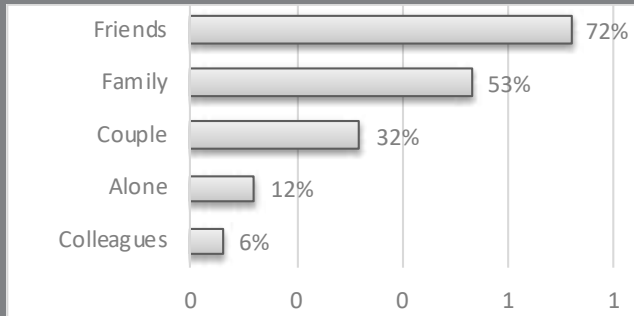


Source: Lebanon’s Economic Crisis and Covid-19 Impact on Domestic Tourism Market – Lebanese University – Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality Management (July 2020).

Type of travel group and ideal size of the group

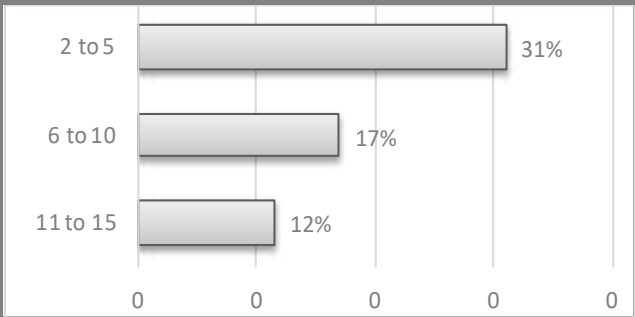
Domestic travellers seek to share their trips in Lebanon with groups of friends (72 per cent) and/ or with their family and relatives (53 per cent). Only 32 per cent travel as a couple, while only 12 per cent travel alone. Regarding group trips, 31 per cent prefer to travel accompanied by 2-5 people, 17 per cent with 6-10 people, and 12 per cent in groups of 11-15 people.

Figure 28. Travel group



Source: Lebanon’s Economic Crisis and Covid-19 Impact on Domestic Tourism Market – Lebanese University – Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality Management (July 2020).

Figure 29. Preferred group size



Source: Lebanon’s Economic Crisis and Covid-19 Impact on Domestic Tourism Market – Lebanese University – Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality Management (July 2020).

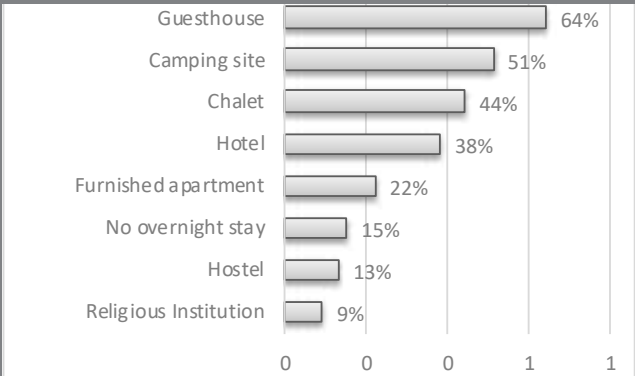
Preferred accommodation type

Guesthouses and campsites are the preferred accommodation types for domestic travellers in Lebanon.

The main reason for this choice is cost reduction, the possibility of staying in more remote rural and natural areas, and the lower perception of risk and insecurity when staying the night outside of conventional hotels.

It should be noted that only 38 per cent of the demand wants to spend the night in hotels during their stay.

Figure 30. Preferred accommodation type



Source: Lebanon’s Economic Crisis and Covid-19 Impact on Domestic Tourism Market – Lebanese University – Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality Management (July 2020).

Willingness to pay for a trip in Lebanon

The willingness to pay for a tourist service is an essential indicator to know the real potential of adding value to the destination. In the case of the domestic traveller from Lebanon, the economic crisis and the uncertainty caused by Covid-19 has caused a decrease in the average purchasing power of the population, which at the same time has reduced the average budget for their leisure travel.

The post-pandemic domestic demand study shows that, on average, the domestic traveller is willing to pay between \$26 and \$60 for a one-day tour, between \$65 and \$100 for a two-day tour package, and between \$13 and \$25 for a day trip organized by themselves.

Figure 31. Estimated average budget for domestic tourism in Lebanon

1-day organized tour	2-day organized package	1-day self-organized trip
From 40,000 to 90,000 LBP	From 100,000 to 150,000 LBP	From 20,000 to 35,000 LBP
From ≈ 26 to 60 USD	From ≈ 65 to 100 USD	From ≈ 13 to 25 USD

Source: Lebanon's Economic Crisis and Covid-19 Impact on Domestic Tourism Market – Lebanese University – Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality Management (July 2020).

13.4 Activities and experiences

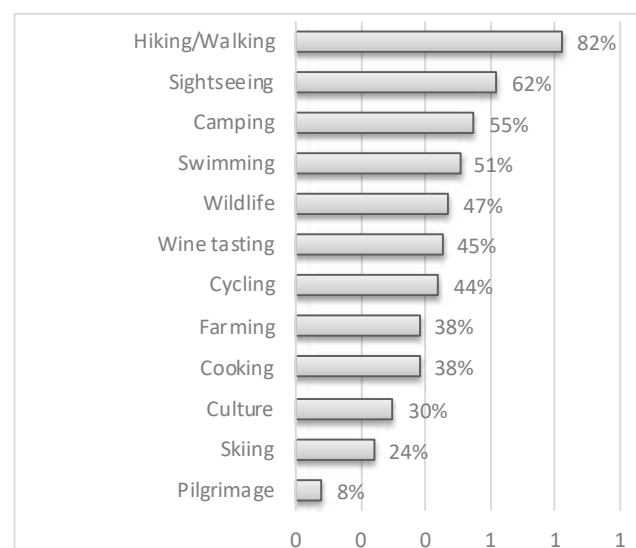
Domestic traveller's preferred tourism activities are related to the enjoyment of leisure experience with loved ones and/or the observation of nature (hiking, sightseeing, camping, wildlife, etc.). Domestic travellers prefer to carry out active tourism activities, which mainly do not require external support or resources, and that can be practiced freely, e.g., walking and sightseeing.

There is another group that also prefers active tourism activities but ones that are not strictly related to nature. These are rural world oriented, e.g., wine tasting, farming, and traditional cooking. And even though culture as a static asset (heritage, monuments, churches, etc.) is not a main driver, it is important to nearly a third of the market. Also, while not mentioned in the research report, hunting is a well-established tradition among Lebanese. However, as mentioned above, it is an informal tradition. There is lack of regulation and a clear enforcement of legal framework.

On the other hand, it is remarkable that, despite being a destination with great potential for ski tourism (there are currently five ski resorts along the mountains), only 24 per cent of domestic tourists want to ski in Lebanon. In conclusion, Lebanon's mountain destinations can offer experiences for most of the tourism activities demanded by domestic travellers.

This means that there is a risk of excluding the domestic demand for some destinations in the face of potential tourist developments that are focused on international tourism, with its greater purchasing power, and which inevitably results in an increase in prices in that area. On the other hand, the fact that the tourism industry is willing to adapt their products to these budgets in the short and medium term may lead to a deterioration in the quality of the services offered, due to the need to cut operating costs to meet the market price set by domestic travellers.

Figure 32. Preferred activities when travelling



Source: Lebanon's Economic Crisis and Covid-19 Impact on Domestic Tourism Market – Lebanese University – Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality Management (July 2020).

Willingness to pay for a guided activity or guide services

The study of post-pandemic domestic demand shows that the domestic traveller is willing to pay an average of \$26 to enjoy an activity or for entry to a tourist site, and approximately \$55 to hire the services of a tour guide.

Figure 33. Willingness to pay for an entrance/activity or guide fees

Entrance / Activity	Guide Fees
Average ≈ 37,000 LBP	Average ≈ 70,000 LBP
Average ≈ 26 USD	Average ≈ 55 USD

Source: Lebanon's Economic Crisis and Covid-19 Impact on Domestic Tourism Market – Lebanese University – Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality Management (July 2020).

3.5 Preferred destinations and areas

Preferred local destinations in Lebanon to be visited in next 6–18 months

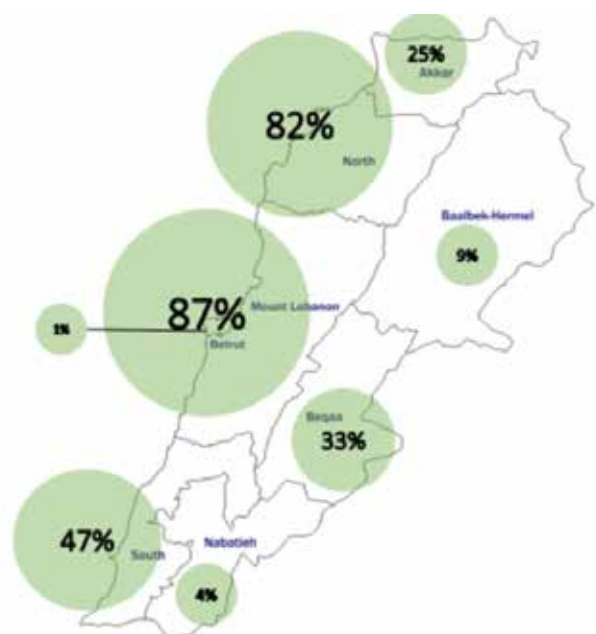
Analysis of the travel preferences of the domestic market in Lebanon (Figure 34) shows that more than 80 per cent of travellers plan to travel to the province of Mount Lebanon and to the North, both areas close to the main urban population centers (Beirut and Tripoli).

On the other hand, the provinces of Baalbeck Hermel and Nabatieh generate the least interest in the domestic market, mainly due to problems with security at the border, the presence of nearby armed conflict, and the distance from the main metropolitan areas.

As Figures 35 and 36 indicate, the main destinations are Chouf, Batroun, Akkar, Tyre, and Bcharreh – where Chouf, Akkar, and Bcharreh are mountain tourism destinations.

This means that the market is aware of the added value a tour guide provides in their tourism experience, as well as of the importance of having well prepared and maintained tourism sites (parks, trails, museums, interpretation centers, viewpoints, etc.).

Figure 34. Local destinations to be visited (by governorate)



Source: Lebanon's Economic Crisis and Covid-19 Impact on Domestic Tourism Market – Lebanese University – Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality Management (July 2020).

Figure 35. Map of local destinations to be visited (by district)



Source: Lebanon's Economic Crisis and Covid-19 Impact on Domestic Tourism Market – Lebanese University – Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality Management (July 2020).

Domestic travellers plan to avoid visiting some areas in Lebanon for the next months

Although domestic demand is less sensitive to political instability in a territory, 28 per cent of domestic demand in Lebanon admits that there are certain areas within the country that they prefer to avoid during their next trip, mainly due to a security problem or the existence of armed conflict in nearby territories.

Further, the incidence of Covid-19 in a certain territory is another reason to avoid traveling to that specific area.

Figure 38 lists the main areas to be avoided by the domestic market in Lebanon and the primary reasons for doing so. Some of these are in territories close to the country's mountainous area, which represents a threat and a challenge for the development of domestic – but especially international – tourism in these destinations.

Figure 38. Areas to be avoided and main reasons

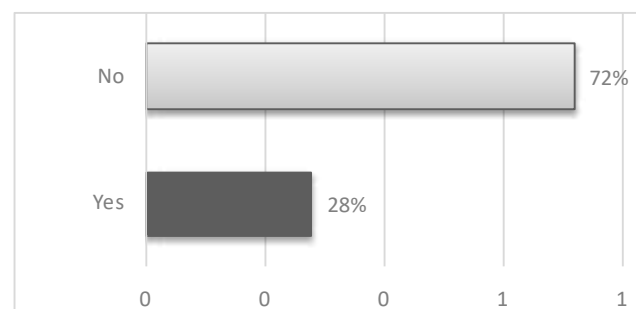
Area to avoid	Reasons	%
Tripoli	Safety and security, Covid-19 cases	21%
South Lebanon	Safety and security, Covid-19 cases, cultural differences	21%
North Lebanon	Far, safety and security, Covid-19 cases	11%
Bekaa	Safety and security, close to border with Syria, Covid-19 cases	7%
Baalbeck	Safety and security, armed conflict	7%
Beirut	Crowded, polluted, mass tourism, high Covid-19 cases	7%
Akkar	Safety and security	5%
Any	Area close to borders with conflict	5%
Aanjar	High Covid-19 cases	3%
Beirut southern suburbs	Safety and security	3%
Tyre	Polluted	2%

Source: Lebanon's Economic Crisis and Covid-19 Impact on Domestic Tourism Market – Lebanese University – Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality Management (July 2020).

Figure 36. List of top 10 destinations to be visited (by district)

Rank	District	%
1	Chouf	37%
2	Batroun	28%
3	Akkar	25%
4	Tyre	22%
5	Bcharreh	20%
6	Jbeil	19%
7	Keserwan	17%
8	Zgharta	15%
9	Jezzine	14%
10	Central Bekaa	9%

Figure 37. Plan to avoid areas in Lebanon in their next trip



Source: Lebanon's Economic Crisis and Covid-19 Impact on Domestic Tourism Market – Lebanese University – Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality Management (July 2020).

4 . LEBANESE MOUNTAIN TOURISM INDUSTRY AND COMPONENTS

Mountains constitute 73 per cent of Lebanon, but they host only 12 per cent of the population and generate only 13 per cent of total direct tourism employment in the country.

This chapter defines the characteristics of rural tourism and ecotourism as a baseline for the development of mountain destinations in Lebanon. The following analysis details the evolution of rural tourism in Lebanon, the benefits it can bring to the territory, the profile of the ecotourist, and the composition of its industry. Additionally, an assessment is conducted to establish Lebanon's current challenges to meet demand needs, as well as to identify how the country can position its mountain territory as a benchmark in rural tourism and ecotourism for the domestic, regional, and international markets.

14.1 Definition, evolution, relevance, and benefits of rural tourism in Lebanon

Definition of rural tourism

The definition of mountain tourism adopted in this document is based on the main principles and values used to define the concept of "rural tourism" used in the National Rural Tourism Strategy, which defines rural tourism as:

- Tourism that takes place in rural territories, outside big urban areas in Lebanon;
- Where visitors experience the authentic Lebanese way of life in villages and rural areas, which is different and unavailable in large urban areas setting;
- Where landscapes, nature, culture, gastronomy, and heritage (both intangible and tangible) are at the heart of activities;
- Where tourism development, businesses, and facilities are of small scale (in buildings and investments in general);
- Allowing interaction and connection with local people (human element is key);
- Where local people are involved in developing and managing their tourism activities for their own social, economic, and cultural benefit;

- Where local communities are aware of the value of local assets, and where they work to preserve them.

This definition can also be applied to mountain tourism, as it shares all these values as well as the perspective of the tourist that looks for a different experience than what can be normally offered in big urban areas or in a 'tourism resort' – surrounded by nature and escaping from classic and mass tourism. The tourism assets in mountain areas of Lebanon are diverse and include lakes, rivers, waterfalls, valleys, mountain trails, villages, rural towns, agricultural fields, farmhouses, museums, arts and crafts ateliers, forest reserves, protected areas (himas), hiking trails, historic and heritage sites and locations, guesthouses, and rural lodgings (eco-lodges).

Some of the activities included in the definition of mountain tourism that can be experienced in Lebanon are: walking, hiking, and trekking; nature-based trips; conservation trips and ecotourism; sightseeing and visiting villages; agritourism; wine and food tourism; adventure and sports; biking and mountain biking; kayaking and rafting; camping; horseback riding; fishing; bird watching; crafts making; local festivals; music and dance; literary discovery and literary trails; visits to historic, archaeological, and heritage sites; and religious tourism, including visits to religious sites and trails.

Evolution of mountain tourism in Lebanon

The development of mountain tourism in Lebanon only began in the late 1990s, so it can be considered as an emerging activity that still has a lot of potential for growth and improvement. The development of the national strategy for rural tourism in 2014–2017 became a milestone for the development of the sector.

Figure 39. Evolution of mountain tourism in Lebanon

Period	Milestones	Description
1950-1975	Conventional Tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Tourism was concentrated mainly in big urban areas (Beirut) and was based on discovering metropolitan sites, which still preserved their authenticity and local heritage, and were not influenced by globalization.
1975-1990	Civil War	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > During the civil war tourism was paralyzed and the country suffered great devastation. It took six years following the end of the war for tourism to resume.
1995-1997	Rural Tourism Pioneers' Initiative – a Niche Market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > The creation of the first Adventure Tourism operators in Lebanon took place between 1995 and 1997. The market was limited to highly specialized foreigners, interested in getting to know 'exotic' destinations; and to the domestic market, which was beginning to discover some mountain territories, attracted by their landscapes, proximity to urban areas, and more temperate climate in summer.
1998-2004	Development of Nature Reserves, Introduction of Ecotourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Starting in 1998, rural tourism with ecotourism principles began to gain popularity, thanks to the designation of the first nature reserves in Lebanon and the introduction of the concept of nature preservation in the sector. > During these years, the number of ecotourism operators increased (7) and one-day trips began to be marketed for the domestic demand, as well as 7-day packages for the international market.
2005-2008	Lebanon Mountain Trail and DHIAFEE Projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Between 2005 and 2008, a development programme funded by the United States Agency for International Development aimed to develop the tourism sector was carried out to promote community tourism and to develop the rural areas of Lebanon. From this programme, the offering of tourist accommodations and ecotourism in rural areas began to be developed. > In parallel, the programme for the development of the Lebanon Mountain Trail (LMT) began to be carried out, with the aim of creating a hiking experience that connects different mountain destinations and thus attracts specialized market segments. > At the end of 2005, the DHIAFEE Network – a rural tourism network – was also created with the aim of increasing economic opportunities in rural areas and encouraging job creation in the tourism sector. > Additionally, new protected areas were designated, and two biosphere reserves and Qhadisha were declared as UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

Period	Milestones	Description
2008-2014	Booming of Rural Tourism Providers and Products	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Because of the development programmes and the increase of protected natural areas in Lebanon, starting in 2008 new tour operator companies specializing in nature tourism and ecotourism in rural areas began to appear. In parallel, projects were carried out by the Ministry of Tourism to improve the accommodation sector. > Starting in 2011, political instability due to the Syrian War resulted in a decrease in the number of international tourists coming to Lebanon. However, this decline was offset by a growing domestic demand, and rural tourism continued to grow.
2014-2017	National Rural Tourism Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > In 2014 Lebanon's National Rural Tourism Strategy was launched, with the aim of facing new challenges in the sector and positioning the country's rural destinations as a benchmark in the region and internationally.
2017-Current	Implementation of the Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > To date, the degree of implementation of the Strategy's initiatives has been medium to low. The current pandemic and the new scenario that these poses require that Lebanon re-establish new strategic lines for the development of tourism in rural areas. > In 2019 there were more than 65 rural tourism/ecotourism/nature tourism operators in rural areas. All these companies have been created in just 25 years. > Nevertheless, there is no certainty about the legal framework about tour operators.

Source: Abou Arrage, 2020

Current and potential driving forces for mountain tourism in Lebanon

The impact of Covid-19, the consequences of the current economic crisis in Lebanon, and the appearance of new demand trends generate a series of driving forces that creates new opportunities in Lebanon. The main opportunities and drivers for the development of mountain tourism in Lebanon are detailed in Figure 40:

Figure 40. Driving forces and the impact of rural tourism in mountain areas in Lebanon

Category	Driving forces	Opportunity for mountain tourism in Lebanon
Features of Lebanon as a tourism destination	<p>Lebanon is a small country and distances between cities and villages are relatively short.</p> <p>The country's temperate weather and the diversity of natural and green landscapes is a driver for people living in the region.</p>	<p>> This facilitates access to mountain destinations from populated areas in a short time and enables domestic demand to enjoy short breaks. Short distances between destinations enables the creation of organized packages as well ones that cover all the country (including mountain areas) in 7-10 days for international tourists.</p> <p>> This can be taken as an opportunity to attract regional markets to mountain areas and show them the beauty of landscapes and biodiversity, by developing and promoting experiences and itineraries for different segments.</p>
Lebanon's mountain tourism value proposition matches with domestic travellers' needs	<p>The busy life of urban residents, and in some cases financial constraints, makes them interested in short escapes and affordable breaks.</p> <p>Lebanese immigrants and expats living abroad have the desire to learn more about the history of the country, reconnect with their relatives and friends in home villages, and bond with their roots and traditions – all while supporting the local economy.</p>	<p>> Mountain rural areas are a great choice for them, since they offer travellers a unique environment to disconnect, relax, and discover new landscapes, surrounded by nature as well as quiet and charming local villages.</p> <p>> Lebanese expat travellers are less influenced by the security situation in the country and will continue to visit their families and relatives. Moreover, they are more involved in the preservation of authenticity and cultural heritage, which mitigates the risk of the banalization of cultural and community tourism.</p>
New travel motivations and trends	<p>Educated Lebanese and young generations have an increased awareness and interest in environmental protection, nature tourism, outdoor adventures, and heritage tourism.</p> <p>Internationally, tourism trends are evolving towards an experiential tourism, looking for authenticity and unique experiences.</p>	<p>> Attracting new segments of travellers who are educated and aware of preservation to the mountain destinations of Lebanon is key, as this will involve adapting the practices of local tour operators towards a more sustainable model to satisfy the needs and preferences of this clientele.</p> <p>> Mount Lebanon favourably answers such a demand because of the diversity of its landscape, biodiversity, and its rural communities, in addition to Lebanese hospitality and the preservation of its authenticity and heritage.</p>
Covid-19 impact on the need to disconnect and escape from mass tourism and crowded areas	<p>Almost 90 per cent of the population in Lebanon lives in urban areas.</p> <p>The urban lifestyle and the daily stress generated by city life have created the need for urban Lebanese (and foreigners) to escape the urban traffic, noise, pollution, and stressful lifestyle of the capital and other major urban cities.</p>	<p>> Mountain areas in Lebanon offer the opportunity to experience a quieter, less polluted environment, and a chance to reconnect with nature and eat healthful and fresh food.</p>

Source: Adapted from Ministry of Tourism, 2015

Benefits of rural tourism in mountain destinations in Lebanon

The correct development of mountain tourism, focused under the pillars of ecotourism and rural tourism mentioned in point 3.1.1, can be an essential component in the sustainable development of rural communities from an economic, social, and environmental point of view. The main benefits that the sustainable development of mountain tourism could bring in Lebanon are defined below:

Figure 41. Benefits of ecotourism and rural tourism in mountain areas in Lebanon

Category	Benefits
Employment and economic benefits for communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > The development of a new economic activity that generates new employment opportunities can be an incentive to stop the depopulation trend that rural areas of Lebanon have suffered in recent years. New job opportunities can be created in accommodations, campsites, and restaurants, as well as tour guides, handicrafts, farmers, etc. > Diversifies the sources of income of local rural communities and generates synergies with alternative income sources.
Social opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Empowers women and youth in local communities and enables them to integrate into the workforce and be involved in economic and social development. > The promotion of local and ancient traditions generates interest on the part of the traveller and encourages their preservation. > Community-based tourism generates human interactions between locals and travellers and increases respect and tolerance between cultures.
Preservation of heritage and nature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Natural and cultural heritage are the pillars of mountain tourism in Lebanon. For this reason, both the local population and visitors have incentives for its preservation and enhancement.
For visitors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > The development of tourist experiences in remote areas – whether located in natural environments or in isolated communities – attracts special interest travellers and increases their willingness to book a unique experience.

Source: Adapted from Ministry of Tourism, 2015

4.2 Current and potential source markets for mountain tourism in Lebanon

The development of mountain tourism in Lebanon can attract different market segments due to the diversity of value proposals that it can offer to each type of traveller. The main current and potential source markets and their primary characteristics are described below, based on key findings from the Lebanon Rural Tourism Strategy:

Domestic market: lebanese living in Lebanon

These are people who live in Lebanon and wish to discover new, alternative leisure and holiday opportunities around the country. This segment is composed by subgroups:

- **Urban families:** looking to spend time with their relatives surrounded by nature, enjoying affordable, healthful, and family-friendly services,

accommodations, and activities where leisure and education are highlighted.

- **Young urban professionals:** educated and looking for trendy experiences and adventures.
- **Special interest groups:** Companies and corporations looking for team building opportunities, clubs and associations looking for summer camps, and outdoor educational activities for groups (birdwatching, hiking, etc.).

Main opportunities and issues of this segment:

- They are aware of the situation in Lebanon and are less affected by the ups and downs of the security situation.
- They have the potential to reduce seasonality through short breaks during the mid and low season.
- International mobility restrictions worldwide due to Covid-19 have generated an increase in interest in discovering their own country.
- ✗ They travel mainly for short periods of time (1-2 days).

- x They are mainly concentrated in areas close to urban centers.
- x Given the reduction in purchasing power, local trips are more affordable than trips abroad, and the cost for activities, tourist packages, and accommodations is relatively lower.

Domestic market: foreign expats living in Lebanon

These are travellers who are looking to discover the local characteristics of Lebanon and who want to become immersed in the local culture. They look for authenticity, try to discover new and unknown places, and want to feel part of the destination by interacting with local communities.

Main opportunities and issues of this segment:

- Have significant purchasing power and provide a higher impact on their destinations, since they tend to hire guide services, stay overnight in boutique accommodations, and participate in nature, cultural, sports, and adventure activities and experiences.
- They become an incentive for their friends and families to visit the country and become 'ambassadors' of the destination.
- x They travel mostly for short periods of time, adapting to the country's festive calendar.
- x They have a greater aversion to risk and insecurity than local travellers.
- x They are mainly concentrated in areas close to urban centers.

Regional international market: arab countries

This refers to tourists from Jordan, Syria, Egypt, or the GCC countries looking for luxury, good food, and good weather in a relaxed country with Muslim traditions and societies. Young Arabs also look to discover new trendy places and to experience outdoor activities and adventure.

Main opportunities and issues of this segment:

- Have high purchasing power and look for trendy and quality activities and services when travelling.
- They are generally aware of the situation in the country and can be less affected by the ups and downs of the security situation.
- x Require very high-quality standards in terms of accommodations and services, especially when travelling to remote areas.
- x Do not look for active tourism activities, prefer other types of entertainment, but appreciate natural landscapes and cultural heritage.

Regional international market: western expats in the GCC

This is an emerging demand segment, as GCC countries are attracting more expats from European and Western countries. They are young professionals, educated and interested in visiting the region during short breaks from the Gulf.

Main opportunities and issues of this segment:

- Have the purchasing power but almost no time to spend, so they look for trendy and quality activities and services when they travel.
- Eager to discover authentic experiences in Lebanon, like nature, sports, adventure, and local culture.
- x Might prefer other 'popular' regional destinations on their bucket list (Jordan, Egypt, etc.). High quality and inspirational media content are needed to inspire and attract this segment to a destination.

International Market – Emigrated Nationals: Lebanese Living and Working Abroad

This subgroup seeks to reconnect with their homeland and are interested in heritage tourism that highlights culture, religion, genealogy, identity, and history. They also have the advantage of speaking the language and are more familiar with local dialects. They are more likely to stay in locally managed accommodations, eat at local restaurants, and shop in locally managed shops than are other international tourists.

Main opportunities and issues of this segment:

- Have strong purchasing power and look for trendy and high-quality tourism activities and services when they come back to visit their relatives.
- They are generally aware of the situation in the country and can be less affected by the ups and downs of the security situation.

International market: european and other foreign countries

This subgroup consists of citizens of all other foreign and European countries, e.g., French, Italian, Spanish, British, American, Australian, etc. For these source markets, Lebanon is perceived as a unique culture and geography in the Middle East, and as a society that blends Western and Arab cultures with a multi-religious composition, namely Christianity and Islam. Recent conflicts at or with neighbouring countries affect the positioning of Lebanon for some markets, perceiving it as an insecure destination with serious official warnings from their national security institutions.

Main opportunities and issues of this segment:

- Lebanon is perceived in Western source markets as a unique destination for cultural tourism in the Middle East.
- They spend from 7 to 10 days in the destination and provide a high impact when travelling by engaging local guides, agencies, transport, and accommodation.
- It is a mature source market that wants to discover new destinations and looks for authenticity, local charm, pristine natural landscapes, and outdoor activities.

- This segment has high purchasing power and is well educated and cultured.
- x Sensitive to political instability, safety, and security issues.
- x Strong competitors among other Middle East destinations.

I4.3 Rural tourism stakeholders and value chain actors

Stakeholders in Lebanon's mountain areas

The rural tourism industry is composed of approximately 4,000 businesses and generates approximately 12,000 direct jobs and employment (12 per cent of the total number of direct jobs in the tourism industry). The industry is composed of services and facilities directly related to the experiences of the tourist, including trip organization, transportation, accommodation, activity providers, attractions, and restaurants. Figure 42 shows the distribution of businesses and the contributions to the employment of each stakeholder.

Figure 42. Tourism stakeholders in mountain areas in Lebanon

Category	Number of businesses	Estimated number of employees
Nature and ecotourism tour operators	65	80 ≈
Local guides	40	40
Transportation services	200	300 ≈
Restaurants	1,900 ≈	6,000 ≈
UNESCO sites	3	400 ≈
Archaeological sites	40	
Protected areas	15	
Museums	30	
Resorts	20	200 ≈
Rural hotels	371	3,000 ≈
Other types of accommodation	281	600 ≈
Wineries	50	≈
Handicraft producers	1000	1000 ≈
Adventure parks	20	100 ≈
Nature and adventure clubs	12	30≈
NGOs	10	50 ≈
Total	4,000 ≈	12,000 ≈

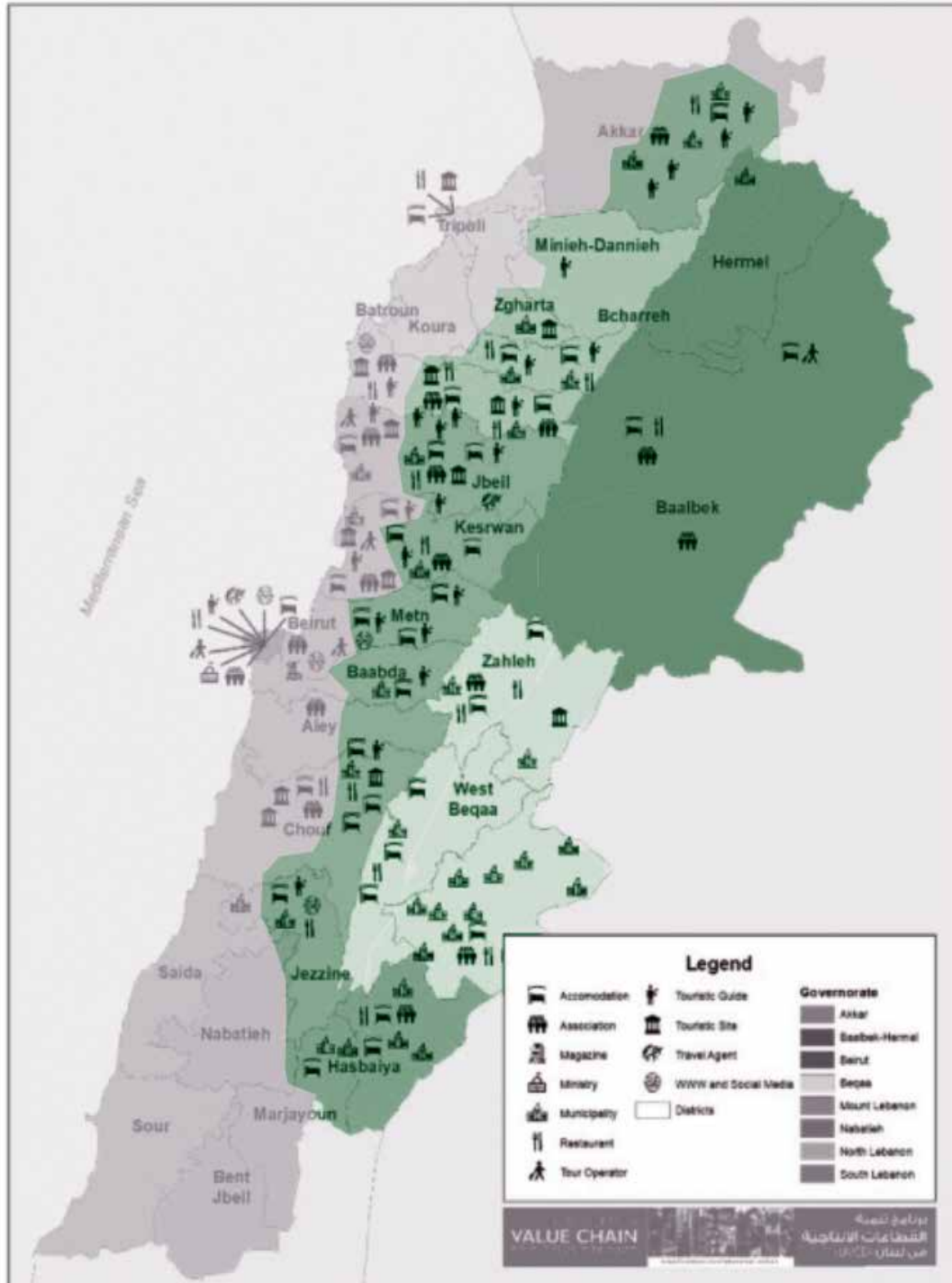
Source: Abou Arrage, 2020.

Note: It is assumed that rural tourism is defined by “inland tourism,” which includes all areas at least 500 meters above sea level and excludes coastal and urban areas in Lebanon.

Location of mountain tourism facilities and services

As shown in the map below, the distribution of tourism facilities across all mountain areas in Lebanon is not homogeneous.

Figure 43. Geographical distribution of tourism stakeholders in mountain areas in Lebanon (located more than 500 meters)



Source: LIVCD rural tourism value chain intervention in Lebanon, 2017

More than half of all tourism facilities (restaurants, accommodations, tour operators, etc.) in rural areas are concentrated in Mount Lebanon governorate. Other mountain areas, such as Akkar, Marjayoun, and Western Baalbeck, have a low density of tourism services mainly due to their low development of the

tourism sector and their proximity to borders with geopolitical conflicts and security issues. Green areas highlighted in the map show mountain territories in Lebanon, including middle mountains, mountains, highlands, and inland plains.

Focus on nature and ecotourism operators in mountain destinations

The number of nature-based tour operators in rural and mountain destinations in Lebanon has increased considerably in the last 20 years, from 4 to 65 companies from 1997 to 2018. These operators are mainly micro-businesses, made up of one or two workers and with an average annual turnover of \$44,000.

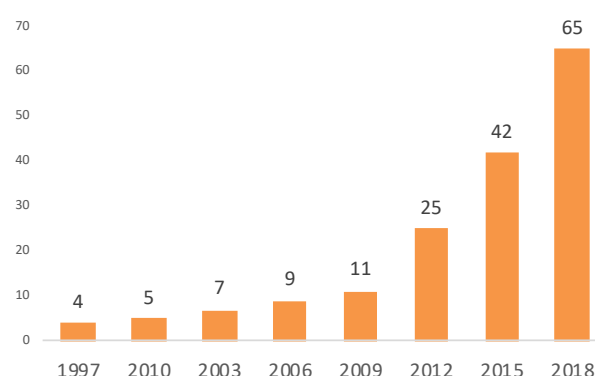
Of the 65 identified operators, it is estimated that only 35 per cent are officially registered, while 60 per cent have no legal validity, and the remaining 5 per cent are registered as NGOs, although they act as a tour operator.

The main factors that prevent the regulation of these companies are the administrative and legal procedures as well as the tax obligations that they face. On the other hand, the lack of regulation of the sector generates unfair competition between companies and the absence of real price competitiveness, which in turn leads to cost-cutting and worse service conditions in the sector. This lack of regulation prevents the industry from providing the necessary safety and quality conditions for visitors. Also, it does not guarantee the adherence to sustainable development principles, which are necessary to preserve fragile natural territories.

In terms of the type of products sold by these operators, more than 75 per cent offer day-tours from Beirut under the label of 'ecotourism'. For 25 per cent of operators, day-tours represent more than 70 per cent of their annual demand, and the remaining 30 per cent are weekend tours. Tours of more than three days are not common, and even less so for the domestic market. On the other hand, only 15 per cent of the operators limit the group size to 12–20 people per trip, while the rest allow more than 20 people per group, thus leading to environmental and social sustainability issues.

The tour operators' practices usually go against the principles of sustainable mountain tourism and pose a challenge that needs to be addressed. The first objective should be to increase the duration of trips and thus the travellers' spending at their destination since day trips hardly add value to the local population. In this regard, an increase in the quality of tours and, consequently, in their price should reduce the average size of groups, thus improving the travellers' experience while reducing the negative impact on the environment and the local population.

Figure 44. Evolution of nature-based tour-operators (1997–2018)



Source: Abou Arrage, 2020

14.4 Achievement of the national rural tourism strategy (2014–2017)

A National Rural Tourism Strategy was elaborated in 2014 with the support of the United States Agency for International Development and adopted by the Ministry of Tourism. Its main objectives were to enhance domestic rural tourism in Lebanon, unlock the great economic potential of this sector in rural areas, and find alternative ways of income generation to face the country's political and security instability. However, most of the strategic objectives and initiatives included in the plan have not been adopted, and the degree of implementation since 2017 has been low. Figure 45 summarizes the level of progress of the eight objectives included in the strategy.

Figure 45. Progress on rural tourism objectives

Objectives	Level of Progress		
	Low	Medium	High
1. Develop and improve marketing and promotion to increase consumer awareness and the visibility of rural tourism destinations, products, and services both domestically and internationally			x
2. Institutionalize rural tourism at the level of local communities	x		
3. Improve and enforce conservation and protection of the environmental, cultural, historical, and agricultural heritage of rural areas	x		
4. Diversify, modernize, and improve quality of rural destinations and products		x	
5. Improve policies, legislation, and regulation of the rural tourism sector and enforcement of laws across the value chain	x		
6. Improve information & data collection and management to support planning	x		
7. Develop the culture of rural tourism among younger generations and in the education system		x	
8. Improve domestic and international business linkages and networking		x	
Summary	4	3	1

Source: Abou Arrage, 2020

Initiatives related to legislation, natural and cultural preservation, and of market intelligence have had the least degree of execution. Other actions, such as the development of experiences in rural areas and the improvement of the distribution network at a domestic and international level, have begun to be developed. Finally, the only action that has been carried out with more success has been the development of marketing actions to publicize inland destinations nationally and internationally.

The study also reveals that, despite the adoption of a national strategy, rural tourism projects and initiatives remain fragmented and are not consistent in terms of their alignment with the principles and values of sustainable tourism. They are market driven and short-term oriented, and consequently the gap between the national strategy and rural development projects is getting wider. Therefore, better coordination and networking among concerned stakeholders and the institutionalization of the sector is key in achieving the goals of the strategy.

4.5 Mountain tourism promotion and commercialization

Mountain tourism in Lebanon has great potential to attract tourism segments, since it brings together a set of assets and resources with great appeal to nature, culture, and adventure travellers. However, the promotion and commercialization of these territories by both public authorities and private industry still has a lot of room for improvement. Many of the destinations and their attractions are still largely unknown to domestic and international markets. Figure 46 describes the current situation of mountain tourism marketing in Lebanon, as well as the key issues in which it is necessary to implement strategic actions to improve the situation.

Figure 46. Summary of current consumer awareness regarding mountain tourism in Lebanon

Strengths	Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Lebanese Ministry of Tourism is present at the international trade shows and international marketing scene. • Lebanon's tourism website (visit-lebanon.org) offers a lot of information regarding mountain destinations, as well as inspirational content for nature, adventure, and cultural tourism activities. It also offers useful content to help travellers plan their trip outside Beirut and emphasizes sustainable tourism in rural areas. • Websites and social media of top destination in mountain areas (Chouf, Qadisha, etc.) have interesting, dynamic, useful, and attractive websites and content that help travellers get inspired and plan their trip to those destinations. • Many online portals, websites, and magazines already exist (i.e., Lebanon Traveller), that showcase the 'other Lebanon'. These media outlets offer an opportunity to promote Lebanon's rural experiences and destinations. • Many in-bound travel agents are well connected with the international market. This is an opportunity to include mountain tourism and its representatives in such international marketing and promotional efforts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Many mountain areas are invisible to consumers and value chain suppliers (tour operators, travel agents, marketers) as they often lack even the most basic promotional material or the right communication channels and business linkages. ✗ Marketing and promotion of mountain and rural destinations remains fragmented without a clear and coherent marketing strategy. Several great initiatives to promote rural tourism in a cooperative approach have been developed in the last few years; however, they were not properly sustained beyond the funding period. ✗ Information and access to information are still weak at the level of the destinations, and information centers are practically non-existent in most rural destinations. Previous initiatives to establish information centers were undertaken but very few were sustained. If there is a will to develop information centers, lessons learned could be shared by those that have succeeded.

Source: Abou Arrage & Abdel Hady, 2019

14.6 Threats of mountain tourism development in Lebanon

International tourists are one of the source markets with the highest potential and attractiveness for nature and rural tourism in the mountain areas in Lebanon. However, the arrival of these visitors is highly influenced by the security and political situation in the country and the region. Following the assassination of Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri in 2005, and after the start of the war in Syria, most of the international operators removed Lebanon from their catalogues. The United States and Canada issued restrictions on travelling to most of the remote rural areas in Lebanon, which greatly affected international tourism demand. According to the International Monetary Fund the number of tourists visiting Lebanon has fallen by more than a third since the beginning of the Syrian crisis, and the international perception regarding the destination has been affected and will not improve in the short term, especially for rural mountain areas located far from Beirut.

The international travel bans from Western countries, which continues after 10 years, is negatively affecting the implementation of sustainable tourism initiatives and restricting the arrival of international ecotourists.

Lebanon's rural and mountain destinations, such as Akkar or Bekaa, with their high potential for nature tourism, are somehow forgotten and/or overlooked by travel agencies, tour operators, and local Destination Management Companies because of psychological or political barriers or because of their image of being unsafe. As such, a crisis management plan, which includes a sound strategy to counter the effects of such negative publicity, needs to be put together by all concerned stakeholders – namely, government officials, the media, and the tourism industry.

The dynamics of the domestic market could also be a threat if mountain tourism is not carefully planned. For example, wealthier citizens looking to have a second residence outside the city often look to the mountain areas. With the advent of the pandemic this seasonal population began to stay longer in the mountains; and once people had the opportunity to go out and travel within the country, many discovered new spots in the higher mountains. This discovery could encourage the appearance of new buildings in the wilder or higher areas. If this is not well planned, there is a high risk of negativity affecting the environment and landscape, which would in turn diminish the attractiveness of these destinations. Additionally, the hunting tradition among Lebanese could also affect the environment since it is not yet properly regulated and enforced.

All these threats must be considered carefully when developing mountain tourism.



5 . MOUNTAIN TOURISM DESTINATIONS IN LEBANON

15.1 Description of Lebanon districts' geography

The Lebanese Mountain landscape is a combination of natural ecosystems and cultural heritage, characterized by a rich and diverse mosaic of ecosystems with high arid uninhabited mountains (1,800 to 3,000 meters) and inhabited middle

mountain and mild hills villages (500 to 1,800 meters). Mountain tourism constitutes a fundamental pillar for the social and economic development of the territory, since seven of the nine governorates and 20 of the 26 districts of Lebanon have mountainous areas with an elevation greater than 500 meters.

Figure 47. Tourism attractions by district and altitude

Governorate	District	Coastline	Hills -100 500m	Middle mountains (500-1,000m)	Mountains (1,000- 2,000m)	Highlands (> 2,000m)	Inland plain (1,100-800m)
Akkar	Akkar	x	x	x	x		
North Lebanon	Tripoli	x	x				
	Koura	x	x				
	Danniyeh	x	x	x	x	x	
	Zgharta		x	x	x	x	
	Bsharri			x	x	x	
	Batroun	x	x	x	x	x	
Keserwan-Jbeil	Jbeil	x	x	x	x	x	
	Keserwan	x	x	x	x	x	
Mount Lebanon	Matn	x	x	x	x	x	
	Baabda	x	x	x	x		
	Aley	x	x	x	x		
	Chouf	x	x	x	x		
South Lebanon	Jezzine		x	x	x		
	Saida	x	x				
	Tyre	x	x				
Nabatieh	Nabatieh		x				
	Bint Jbeil			x			
	Marjeyoun		x	x			
	Hasbaya		x	x	x		
Bekaa	Rashaya			x	x	x	
	West Bekaa			x	x		x
	Zahle			x	x		x
Baallbeck-Hermel	Baallbeck			x	x	x	x
	Hermel			x	x	x	x

The analysis of the main mountain destinations in Lebanon focuses on those districts with mountainous areas with an altitude greater than 500 meters.

15.2 Mountain tourism attractions per altitude and district

The following figure describes the distribution of tourism attractions per district and altitude sorted in descending order by the number of attractions in mountain areas (from 1,000 to 2,000 meters), which represent almost 40 per cent of total mountain tourism attractions in the country. These mountain attractions are also well distributed across the country (among more than 15 districts), as stated in the GINI indicator.

Regarding the overall distribution of mountain attractions in Lebanon, the districts of Batroun, Jbeil, Chouf, Akkar, and Matn offer the largest number of

mountain tourism experiences, representing 45 per cent of the total attractions. It is also remarkable that 15 districts offer tourism attractions in three or more different geographic environments, which allows for the creation of rich and diverse natural and cultural itineraries across these different territories. Finally, the GINI indicator shown in the bottom row of Figure 48 indicates that attractions in mountain villages, middle mountains, and mountains are well distributed across the various districts, while attractions in the highlands and plains are more concentrated in specific regions. All in all, the overall distribution is quite good based on the total distribution column.

Figure 48. Tourism attractions by district and altitude

District	All mountains village	Bekaa plain (800-1,100m)	Highlands (>2,000m)	Middle mountains (500-1,000m)	Mountains (1,000-2,000m)	Total
Matn	2	0	0	39	50	91
Jbeil	2	0	2	35	48	87
Bcharreh	4	0	4	6	43	57
Batroun	2	0	0	69	38	109
Akkar	2	0	2	54	38	96
Chouf	2	0	0	51	35	88
Keserwan	1	0	1	38	26	66
Zgharta	3	0	0	26	26	55
Baabda	1	0	0	10	24	35
Dennieh	2	0	4	7	23	36
Rachaya	2	0	1	0	23	26
Jezzine	2	0	0	14	13	29
Aley	1	0	0	34	10	45
Hasbaya	2	0	0	32	10	44
Baalbeck	0	44	0	0	10	54
West Bekaa	0	41	0	0	1	42
Koura	0	0	0	26	0	26
Bint Jbeil	0	0	0	13	0	13
Marjayoun	0	0	0	13	0	13
Nabatieh	0	0	0	9	0	9
Tyre	0	0	0	4	0	4
Hermel	0	8	2	0	0	10
Zahle district	0	42	0	0	0	42
Baabda	2	0	0	10	24	36
GINI Index	0.49	0.867	0.787	0.537	0.542	0.386

15.3 Analysis of mountain tourism potential and development per district

Mountain tourism development per district has been assessed according to five variables, which describe the current and potential performance, relevance, and development of mountain tourism in each district. The variables used to conduct the analysis are the following:

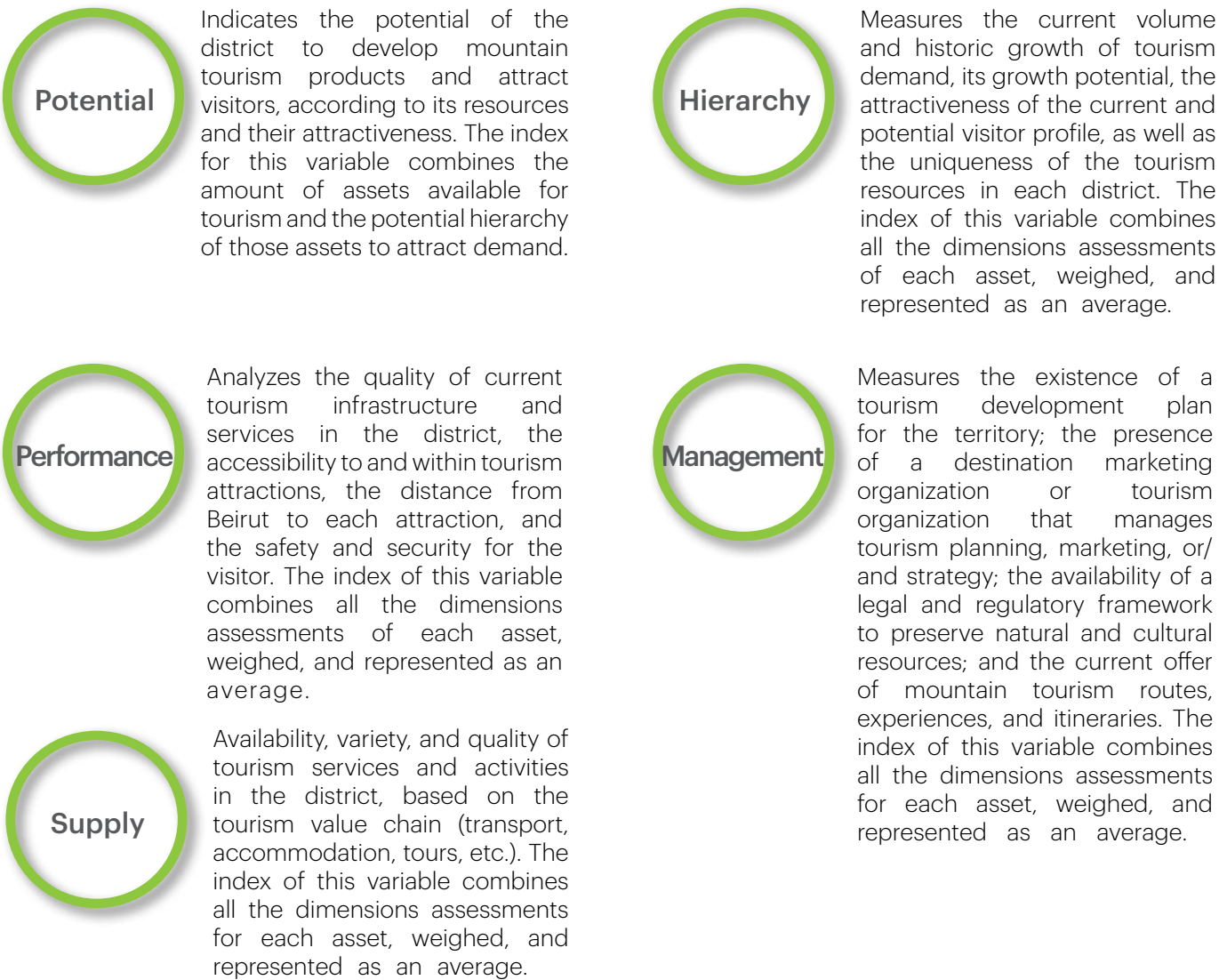


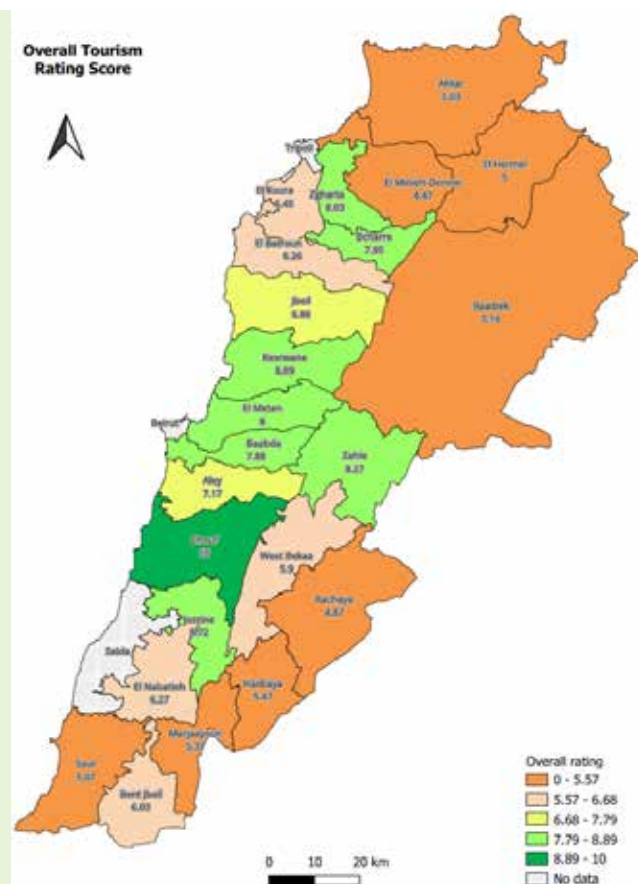
Figure 49 shows the absolute results of the assessment that has been conducted for each of the tourism attractions of each district. Each attraction has been assessed according to its performance per variable, assigning values from 0 (poor) to 10 (very good) according to qualitative (experts' consultation, field visits, national experts' assessments) and quantitative criteria (current available data). Based on this methodology, the figure provides some insights for the identification of top priority districts with the highest concentration and relevance for mountain tourism in Lebanon.

Figure 49. Analysis of Mountain Tourism Potential and Development per District

	Tourism Potential	Tourism Hierarchy	Tourism Performance	Management of Tourism	Tourism Supply	Overall rating
Akkar	8,55	7,73	5,48	4,27	3,04	5,03
Aley	4,03	6,95	8,74	4,23	7,18	7,17
Baabda	3,29	8,24	8,99	6,58	7,18	7,88
Baalbeck	5,28	7,81	5,47	4,73	3,08	5,16
Batroun	10,00	6,98	9,15	4,71	4,10	6,26
Bcharreh	5,84	9,46	8,96	7,92	5,62	7,95
Bint Jbeil	1,28	6,13	7,18	7,96	3,33	6,03
Dennieh	3,34	7,33	5,31	3,70	2,17	4,47
Hasbaya	4,41	6,72	6,24	5,97	3,33	5,47
Hermel	1,20	9,57	5,10	2,63	3,08	5,00
Jbeil	8,39	7,87	9,03	5,76	4,74	6,86
Jezzine	3,06	9,42	9,16	9,18	6,79	8,72
Keserwan	6,22	8,69	10,00	7,04	7,83	8,69
Koura	2,22	7,31	8,71	4,96	4,58	6,45
Marjayoun	1,20	7,26	6,65	4,45	3,33	5,37
Matn	8,01	7,94	9,46	5,97	7,37	8,00
Nabatieh	0,82	7,97	8,31	6,04	3,33	6,27
Rachaya	2,47	6,22	5,91	4,01	3,33	4,87
Chouf	8,88	8,70	9,54	10,00	10,00	10,00
Tyre	0,38	7,61	6,23	3,18	3,33	5,07
West Bekaa district	4,01	6,92	7,38	6,45	3,33	5,90
Zahle district	4,64	9,06	8,86	7,49	6,96	8,27
Zgharta	5,43	10,00	8,92	5,46	6,90	8,03
Overall average	4,5	7,9	7,8	5,8	5,0	6,6

As noted in Figure 49, Chouf, Zahle, Zgharta, Matn, Jezzine, Keserwan, and Bcharreh are the top geographic areas for mountain tourism in Lebanon, since they concentrate a high demand volume, show the highest growth and development potential, and offer the largest quantity and variety of tourism services and infrastructure. Moreover, some of these districts also show the highest performance in managing their resources, which indicates that they are the most mature in Lebanon.

Figure 50. Overall tourism rating score combining all variables, per district

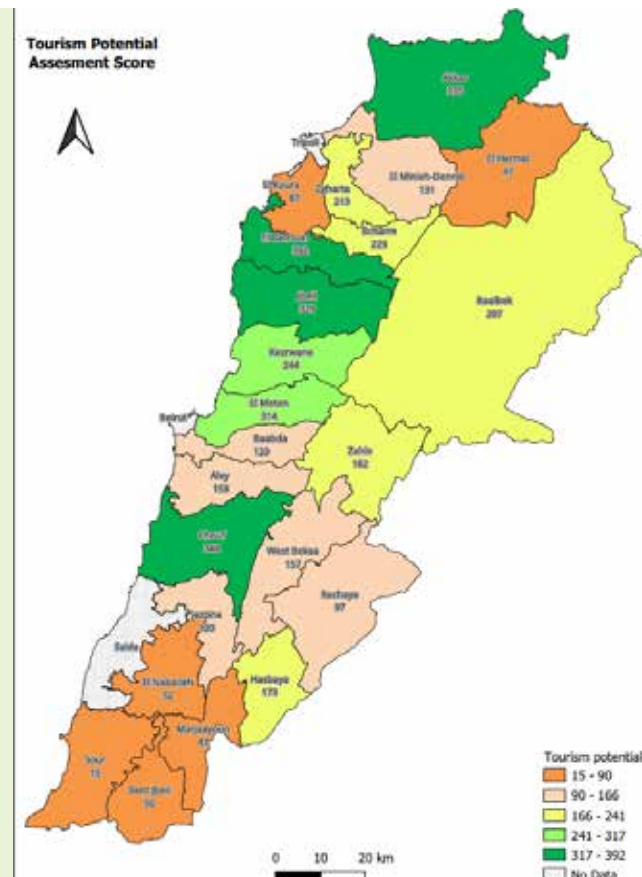
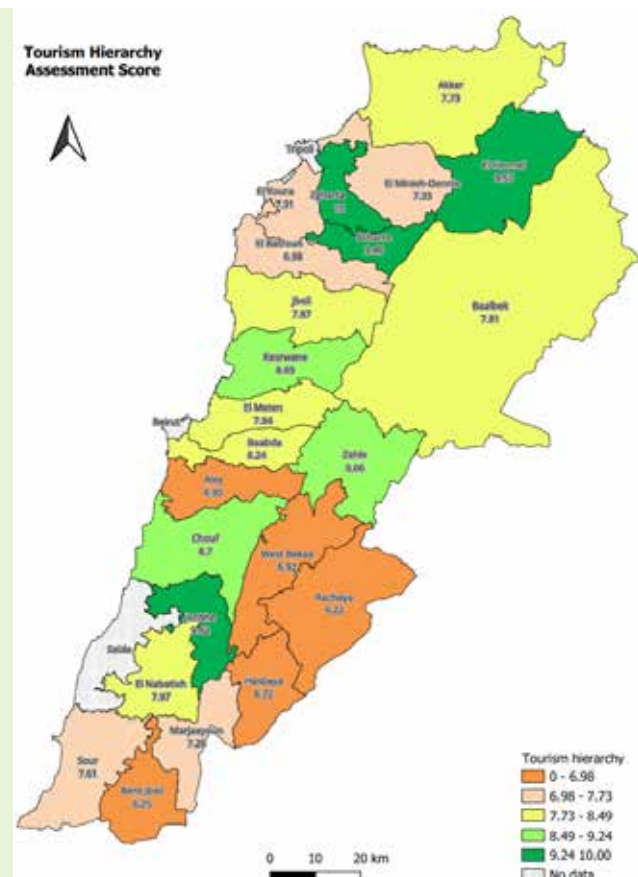


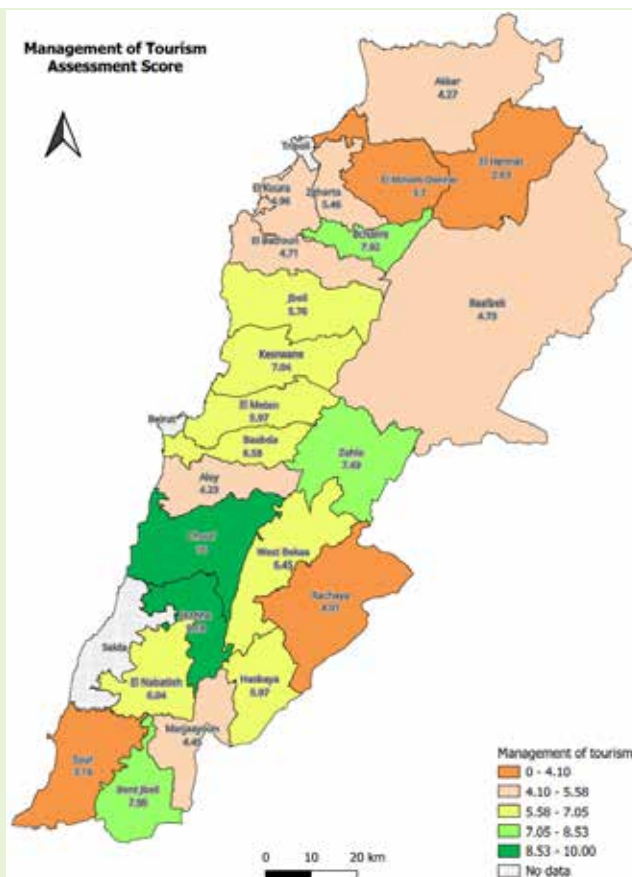
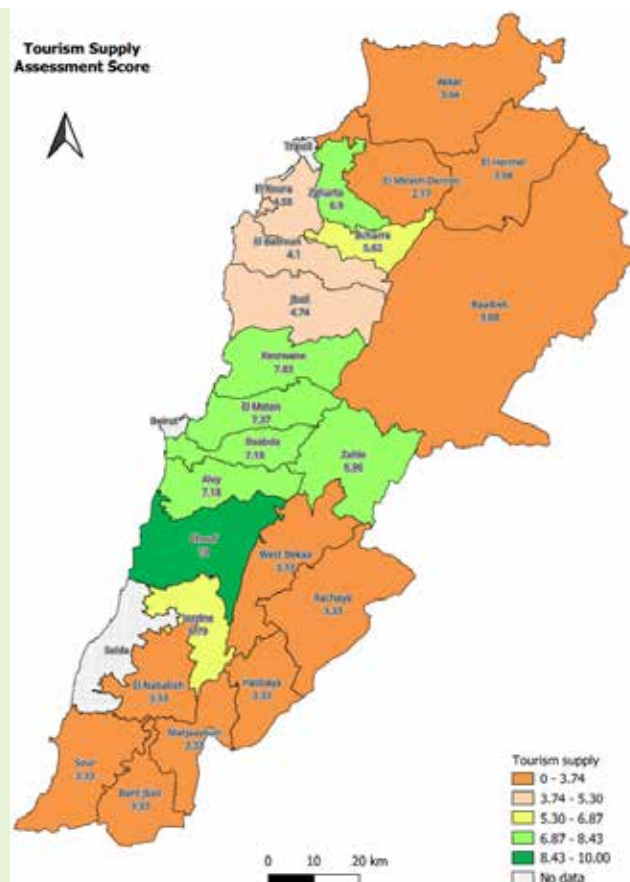
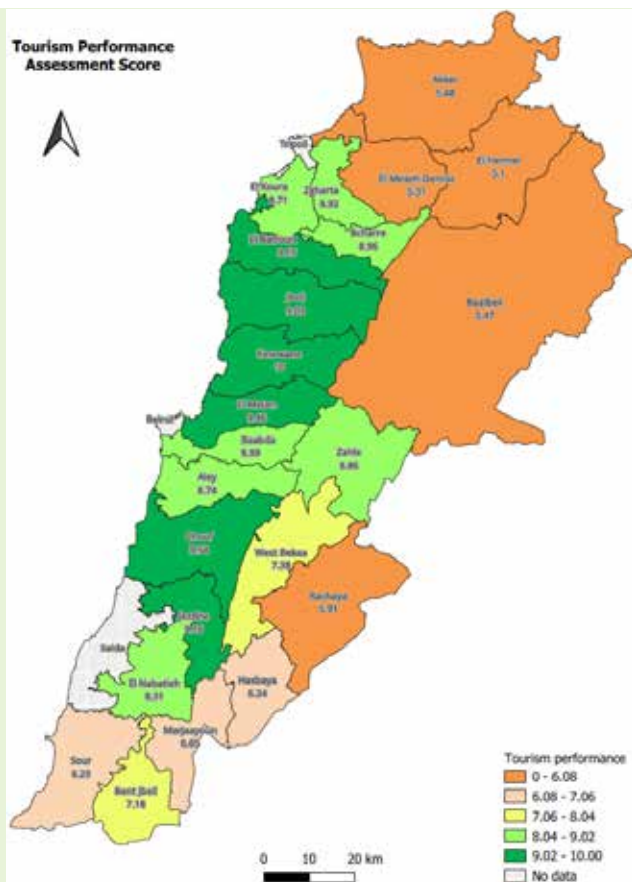
The map in Figure 50 illustrated the degree of tourism readiness of each district – from orange (low) to green (high) –in terms of tourism supply and performance, potential, hierarchy of assets, and overall management.

It is clearly seen that central western districts are the most tourism ready. It is also clear the eastern side of the mountain ranges and the northern and southern areas are underdeveloped.

The challenge should be to consolidate and make more sustainable the best areas and to develop the other ones, distributing tourism benefits in a more balanced way.

However, when conducting analysis of each variable separately and comparing the average performance of each district (and not the absolute total as above), the specific characteristics of each destination are noted in the following maps and figures.





In terms of performance and supply, districts on the western side of the mountain districts have better assessments. Chouf is the best positioned district, with the top overall ranking as well as for management and supply, and with an above average assessments in the other variables. Jezzine and Keserwan follow in the overall ranking. Jezzine is good in hierarchy and management, while Keserwan is good at supply and performance. Zahle and Zgartha have good overall ranking assessments, specifically in terms of hierarchy and performance. Batroun and Jbeil have both great potential and good performances. Other specific situations are Matn, with good assessments for all variables; Bcharreh, with a great assessment for hierarchy and management; and Aley, with good supply and performance assessments (with the need to create attractiveness).

Curiously, Baalbeck receives low assessments despite the huge attractiveness of its World Heritage Roman Temples. This could show the need to improve supply performance and for an active tourism board. Finally, Akkar, which has great potential because of its volume of tourism assets and good hierarchy, has almost no tourism supply development.

In Figure 51, 10 is the maximum punctuation assigned to a district for each variable. Dark green cells indicate the top performers per variable (column); light green cells indicate performers that excel above the average (average + standard deviation); and yellow cells indicate districts quite close to the average (always above the average). No coloured cells mean that they are below the average.

Figure 51. Comparative analysis of district's performance in each variable

District	Potential	Hierarchy	Perform.	Manag.	Supply	Overall rating
Akkar	8,5	7,73	5,48	4,27	3,04	5,03
Aley	4,0	6,95	8,74	4,23	7,18	7,17
Baabda	3,3	8,24	8,99	6,58	7,18	7,88
Baalbeck	5,3	7,81	5,47	4,73	3,08	5,16
Batroun	10,0	6,98	9,15	4,71	4,10	6,26
Bcharreh	5,8	9,46	8,96	7,92	5,62	7,95
Bint Jbeil	1,3	6,13	7,18	7,96	3,33	6,03
Donnieh	3,3	7,33	5,31	3,70	2,17	4,47
Hasbaya	4,4	6,72	6,24	5,97	3,33	5,47
Hermel	1,2	9,57	5,10	2,63	3,08	5,00
Jbeil	8,4	7,87	9,03	5,76	4,74	6,86
Jezzine	3,1	9,42	9,16	9,18	6,79	8,72
Keserwan	6,2	8,69	10,00	7,04	7,83	8,69
Koura	2,2	7,31	8,71	4,96	4,58	6,45
Marjayoun	1,2	7,26	6,65	4,45	3,33	5,37
Matn	8,0	7,94	9,46	5,97	7,37	8,00
Nabatieh	0,8	7,97	8,31	6,04	3,33	6,27
Rachaya	2,5	6,22	5,91	4,01	3,33	4,87
Chouf	8,9	8,70	9,54	10,00	10,00	10,00
Tyre	0,4	7,61	6,23	3,18	3,33	5,07
West Bekaa	4,0	6,92	7,38	6,45	3,33	5,90
Zahle	4,6	9,06	8,86	7,49	6,96	8,27
Zgharta	5,4	10,00	8,92	5,46	6,90	8,03
Average	4,5	7,9	7,8	5,8	5,0	6,6

5.4 Protected areas as mountain tourism destinations in Lebanon

The Protected Areas Framework (PAF) Law N° 130/2019 dated 30 April 2019 has defined four categories of protected areas. This law consists of 23 articles and aims at providing for the natural areas in Lebanon through their prevention and protection, considered an essential pillar of rural development policy and ecotourism. The law establishes the following five objectives:

- (i) Protection of the components of biological diversity, especially those that are threatened, poor, rare, inclined, or unique;
- (ii) Reconstruction of the natural biodiversity landscape.
- (iii) Ecosystems preservation;
- (iv) Protection of birds, as well as both sedentary and migratory species;
- (v) Preservation of landscapes and distinctive natural features.¹

The PAF opens new categories for protection, some of which are perfectly suited to protecting tourism landscapes (in addition to their primary goal of conservation). These categories are:

A

Nature Reserve, which is defined as a terrestrial or marine zone in which ecosystems, habitats, and species of specific importance must be protected because they are either endemic or are rare or endangered.

B

Natural Park, which is defined as a vast rural territory, partially inhabited, with exceptional natural and cultural heritage, recognized nationally and deserving protection for the long term.

C

Natural Landmark Sites, which corresponds to an area containing one or more natural features of exceptional importance that deserve protection because of their rarity, representativeness, or beauty.

D

Hima, which is defined as a Community-Based Natural Resources Management system that promotes sustainable livelihood, resources conservation, and environmental protection for human well-being [Saleh, 2011].

1. See [https://www.fao.org/faolex/results/details/en/c/LEXFAOC192741/#:~:text=Protected20%areas20%are20%divided20%into,sustainable20%use20%of20%natural20%resources\).](https://www.fao.org/faolex/results/details/en/c/LEXFAOC192741/#:~:text=Protected20%areas20%are20%divided20%into,sustainable20%use20%of20%natural20%resources).)

The law also distinguishes between: (i) nature reserves located on public property, established by a law defining the geographical scope of the reserve and the surrounding belt zone, in addition to the special rules for protection; and (ii) natural reserves located on private property, established after the written consent of all owners to the project, according to a contract between the Lebanese state represented by the person of the Minister of Environment and the owners, for a period of no less than 20 years renewable, in which the geographical scope of the reserve and the surrounding belt zone and their management are defined.

A volunteer committee has been established for each natural reserve, supervising its good management, and setting and implementing its annual financial budget. Each committee, in coordination with the working group, proposes a protected management plan for a period determined according to its characteristics. Some activities in the natural reserve that are implemented within the framework of sustainable use can be permitted in line with the management plan, based on an Environmental Impact Assessment or Initial Environmental Examination, wherever the Ministry of the Environment deems it necessary.

Categories (a) and (b) of Law 130 dated 30 April 2019 may have restrictions for tourism activities or may have stronger conservation criteria. Nevertheless, if they are implemented, tourism will be benefited (e.g., there will be new attractive destinations). Hima allows activities in balance with other environmental and social components. This Hima category could be aligned directly for tourism when speaking about a specific landscape, rock, forest, lake, or mountain, etc. These sites may have more flexible regulations and constraints in terms of human activities.

While all these previous categories address natural areas, tourism landscapes need cultural areas as well. This refers to rural landscapes, hamlet layouts, village atmospheres, urban architectural landscape, and even human traditional dress code, etc.

The work in progress project “STEPping up Nature Reserves Capacity – STEP4Nature” is financed by the Agenzia Italiana per la Cooperazione allo Sviluppo and is to be executed by the Ministry of Environment (MoE). UNDP is to be responsible for the project’s implementation using the agency’s Direct Implementation Modality. This programme could be of great help for combining protection with tourism activities. Also, the Society for the Protection of Nature in Lebanon (SPNL), an NGO, has been working for a long time on Hima as a conservation concept, with many areas already created and with strong experience and good practices in place. Their lessons learned would be of great help to implement Himas as concepts for tourism.

A list of areas to work with the STEP4Nature project, which is the baseline to consider within this strategy, is as follows:

Figure 52. Lists of protected areas of Lebanon

Nature reserves: 18

#	Reserve	Legal Instrument	Creation Date	Approximate Surface Area (ha)	Elevation Zone (meters)	International Designations	Appointed Protected Area Committee	Management Plan
1	Horsh Ehden	Law 121	09/03/1992	1.740	1,200–1,900	Important Bird Area ((I B A	Yes	Yes
3	Karm Chbat	M o E Decision 1 4 / 1	06/10/1995	520	1,400–1,900	None	No	No
4	Al Chouf Cedars	Law 532	24/07/1996	15.647	900–2,000	Biosphere Reserve, IBA	Yes	Yes
6	Bentael	Law 11	20/02/1999	75,31	250–800	IBA	Yes	Yes
7	Yammouni	Law 10	20/02/1999	2.100	1,400–2,000	None	Yes	No
8	Tannourine Cedars	Law 9	20/02/1999	195,48	1,300–1,800	IBA	Yes	Yes
9	Wadi Al Houjeir	Law 121	23/07/2010	3.595	250–400	None	Yes	No
10	Mashaa Chnaniir	Law 122	29/07/2010	27	500–530	None	Yes	No
11	Kafra	Law 198	18/11/2011	40	~650	None	Yes	No
12	Ramya	Law 199	18/11/2011	20	~650	None	Yes	No
13	Debl	Law 200	18/11/2011	25	~600	None	No	No
14	Beit Leef	Law 201	18/11/2011	20	~550	None	No	No
15	Jaj Cedars	Law 257	15/04/2014	20	~1,650	None	Yes	No
16	Nmayrieh	Law 169	05/08/2020	10,2	~300	None	No	No
18	Mount Hermon	Law 202	30/12/2020	1260	1,700	None	No	No

Nature reserves in pipeline: 5

#	Location of Proposed Protected Area		Status
1	Donnieh	North Lebanon	Under final approval by Parliament
2	Jabal Rihan	South Lebanon	Under final approval by Parliament
3	Qammouaa	North Lebanon	Preparation phase (awaiting approval of relative municipalities)
4	Ras El Chakaa	North Lebanon	MoE finalized and submitted to Council of Ministers
5	Zibquine Sarada	South Lebanon	Preparation phase (awaiting more information concerning land ownerships and maps)

Nature sites: 21

#	Decision/Decree No.	Date	Location	District
1	Decision 15/1	1995	Faqra Natural Bridge	Kesrouan
2	Decision 151	1997	Kadisha Valley	Bcharreh
3	Decision 34	1997	Ibrahim River to sea outfall	Jbeil
4	Decision 22	1998	Al Jawz River to sea outfall	Batroun
5	Decision 29	1998	Al Damour River to sea outfall	Chouf
6	Decision 97	1998	Al Kalb River to sea outfall	Kesrouan
7	Decision 130	1998	Beirut River to sea outfall	Beirut and Mount Lebanon
8	Decision 131	1998	Al Awali River to sea outfall	Saida
9	Decision 132	1998	Forests between Ain El Hour- Daraya- Debiyé- Bérjin; Sheikh Osman Forest; Deir al Mokhalis surrounding; Ain w Zein Hospital surrounding; Dalboun forest; Al Mal valley; Kafra wells; Ainbal valley sites	Chouf
10	Decision 187	1998	Al Makmel Mountain	North Lebanon
11	Decision 188	1998	Arka River to sea outfall	Akkar
12	Decision 189	1998	Al Assi River to sea outfall	Hermel
13	Decision 19	2002	Al Qammoua Area	Akkar
14	Decision 21	2002	Al Qaraqeer Valley	Zgharta
15	Decision 22	2002	Dalhoun Forest	Chouf
16	Decision 8	2004	Baatara Sinkhole	Tannourine
17	Decree 7494	2012	Jabal Moussa	Kesrouan
18	Decree 11949	2014	Kassarot Grotto	Metn
19	Decree 2878	2016	Ehmej	Jbeil
20	Law 131	2019	Horsh Beirut	Beirut
21	Decree 7834	2021	Ejdehbrine	Koura

Nature sites in pipeline: 5

#	Decision/Decree No.	Date	Location	District
1	Draft Decree		(Pigeon Rock (Raouché	Beirut
2	Draft Decree		Batroun Beach	Batroun
3	Draft Decree		Kfarhata	Batroun
4	Draft Decree		Litani	West Bekaa
5	Draft Decree		Yaroun	Bint Jbeil

Hima: 25

#	Location	District
1	Ebeles-Saqi	South Lebanon
2	Qoleileh	South Lebanon
3	Mansouri	South Lebanon
4	Roum	South Lebanon
5	Qaytouli	South Lebanon
6	Ain Zebdeh	West Bekaa
7	Kherebet Anafar	West Bekaa
8	Qaroun	West Bekaa
9	Aitanit	West Bekaa
10	Anjar	Central Bekaa
11	KfarZabad wetland	Central Bekaa
12	West Baalback	North Bekaa
13	Charbein	North Bekaa
14	Jdeidet El-Fakiha	North Bekaa
15	Jbeil	Mount Lebanon
16	Tarshish	Mount Lebanon
17	Aakoura	Mount Lebanon
18	Kayfoun	Mount Lebanon
19	Kfar Matta	Mount Lebanon
20	Ras Al Matn	Mount Lebanon
21	Hammana	Mount Lebanon
22	Maabour Al-Abiad	North Lebanon
23	Andket	North Lebanon
24	Menjez	North Lebanon
25	Anfeh	North Lebanon

Important Bird Areas (15), Important Plant Areas (20), and Key Biodiversity Areas (26)


#	Important Bird Areas (IBA)	Important Plant Area (IPA)	Key Biodiversity Areas (KBA)
1	Semi Deserts of Ras Baalbeck	Aarsal	Aarsal – Ras Baalbeck Plateaux
2	Aamiq Wetland	Aammiq	Ammiq
3	Upper Mountains of Akkar-Donnieh	Qammouaa-Dinnyeh-Hermel	Akkar-Danniyeh Mountains – Hermel Plateau
4	Palm Islands Nature Reserve	Palm Islands	Palm Islands
5	Horsh Ehden Nature Reserve	Bcharreh-Ehden	Bcharreh-Ehden - Qadisha Valley
6	Hima Ebel es-Saqi	Ras Chekka	Ras Chekka
7	Tannourine Cedars Nature Reserve	Tannourine	Tannourine Hadath ej-Jebbe
8	Jabal Moussa Mountain	Wadi Jannah	Nahr Ibrahim Valley
9	Riim / Sannine Mountain	Sannine - Knaissseh	Mount Sannine and Mount Kneisse
10	A-Chouf Cedar Nature Reserve	Chouf	Mount Barouk
11	Beirut River Valley	Jbail Coast	Nahr Beirut Valleys
12	Bentael Nature Reserve	Keserwan	Jbail Coast
13	Ramlieh Valley	Nahr Ed-Damour	Nahr El-Kalb Valley
14	Hima Anjar / Kfar Zabad	Beirut – Jiyeh Coast	Nahr Ed-Damour Valleys
15	Lake Qaraoun	Tyre - Naqoura	Beirut-Jiyeh Coast
16		Rihane	Tyr-Naqqoura Coast
17		Mount Makmel	Jabal Rihane
18		Hermel Plain	Mount Makmel
19		Mount Hermon	Hermel Plain
20		Menjez	Mount Hermon
21			Menjez
22			Sarada
23			Ehmej-Jaj
24			Nahr el-Awwali Valley
25			Afqa Plateau
26			Mount Mneitre

Source: STEP4Nature project.

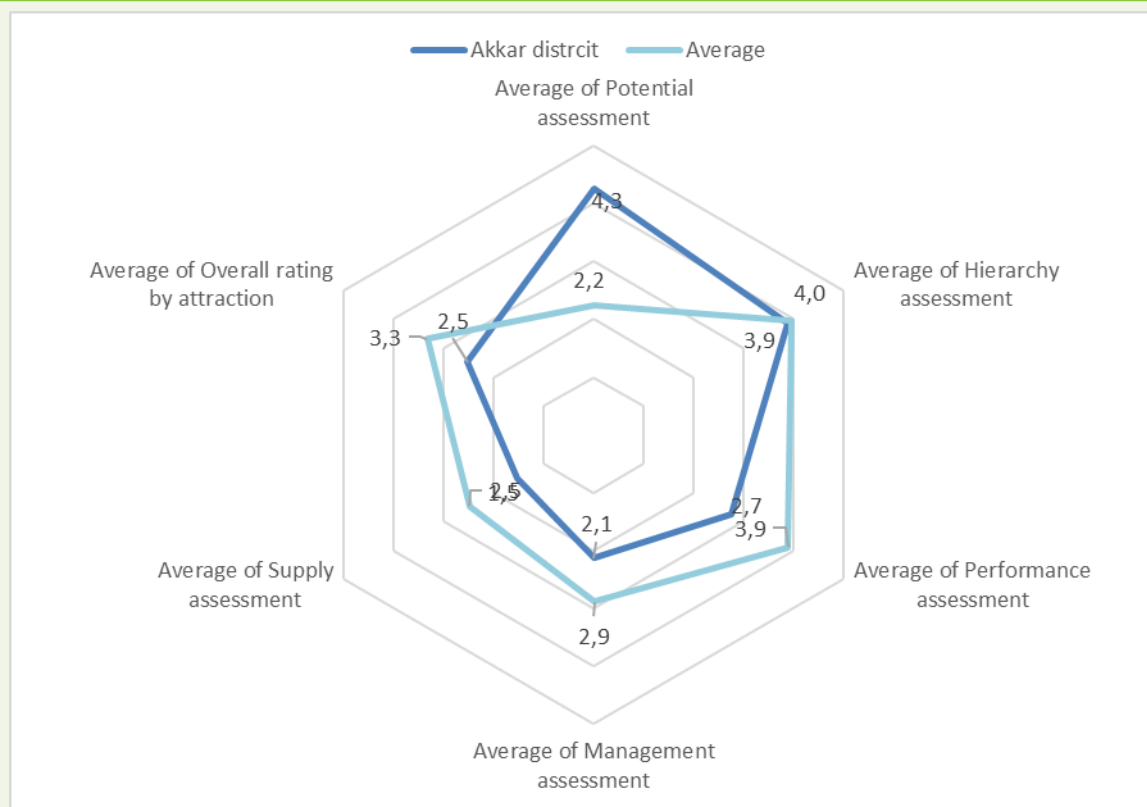


5.5 Brief description of mountain tourism destinations in Lebanon

5.5.1 Akkar

Akkar District	
DESCRIPTION	LOCATION
<p>Akkar is the most northern district in Lebanon and is considered the most deprived area of the country, mainly due to instability, security issues, and geopolitical conflicts. However, this district is considered to have the richest natural attractions and forest diversity in Lebanon, and it is one of the best destinations for nature lovers looking for experiences off the beaten trails.</p>	
MAIN NATURAL SITES	
<p>Akkar is known as one of the best hiking destinations in Lebanon. Some of the trails and areas are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Karm Chbat Cedar Reserve: Natural reserve that currently needs support for management and preservation. - Kamouaa Plain Forest: A well-known hiking destination rich in fir, cedar, and juniper trees. - Fnaidiq Forest: The richest fir-tree forest in Lebanon. A well-known hiking destination, rich in biodiversity. - Meshmesh Cedar Forest: A well-known hiking destination, rich in biodiversity where new flora species are being discovered. 	
MAIN CULTURAL SITES	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Arqa Archeological Site: Considered one of the most important sites in northern Lebanon. The archaeological site used to be a fortress and goes back to the Neolithic period. - Jaalouk Temple: A Roman temple and a large Byzantine church. Surrounded by an area rich in history, but with lack of infrastructure. - Menjiz Dolmens: An itinerary through the dolmens of Menjiz. 	
INFRASTRUCTURE, SERVICES, AND MOBILITY	
<p>Akkar is accessible from its borders with Syria and the Hermel and Donniyeh districts. Akkar's main and internal roads are in bad condition. Road lightings are poor, and pavement is not appropriate. Travelling within the Akkar district takes place mainly by car. Public transportation is available with stopovers in Tripoli but does not reach all the mountain areas. Going from one village to another should be arranged by a private taxi.</p>	
NATURE AND MOUNTAIN TOURISM ACTIVITIES AND SERVICES	
<p>Day guiding trips with a high focus on hiking and camping during spring and summer and snowshoeing and Nordic skiing during winter. These areas are also part of tourism programmes based mainly on hiking, of one-week duration, that are promoted by national ecotour operators.</p>	
ANALYSIS OF AKKAR PERFORMANCE AND COMPETITIVENESS AS A TOURISM DESTINATION	
<p>The figure below shows the performance and competitiveness of Akkar district as a tourism destination according to an evaluation from 1 (low) to 5 (high) of the different pillars described in section 5.2. The analysis concludes that Akkar's potential is highly above the average, which indicates that it has one of the highest potentials for further development in terms of product and market diversification. Although it is not a mature destination, the hierarchy of tourism assets is at the average level of the whole Lebanon, which means a high assessment. Therefore, Akkar should be considered a top priority destination for mountain tourism development for the mid-to-long term. However, the evaluation highlights the need to invest resources and implement strategies to reinforce the supply of tourism facilities, management policies, and the current performance of the destination.</p>	

Akkar District




CONCENTRATION OF TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN AKKAR

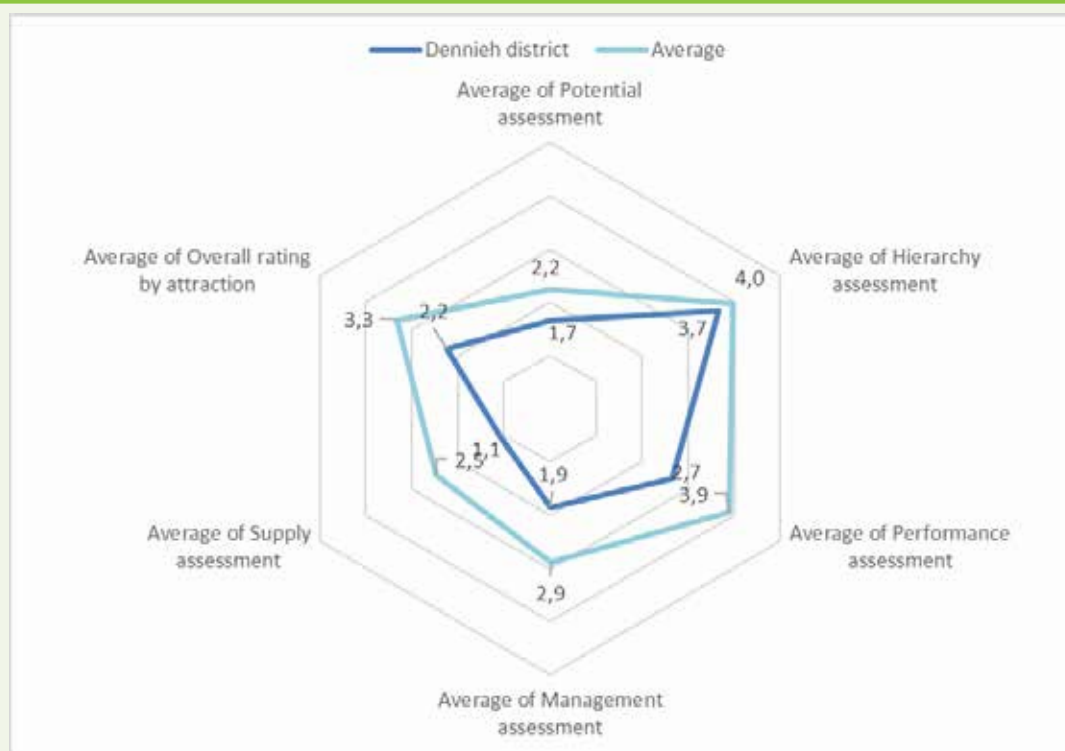
The following table indicates how concentrated is tourism development in Akkar and which are the main villages in the district in terms of tourism demand, current performance, and tourism offer and attractiveness. The table shows that tourism in Akkar is concentrated mainly in the two villages of Al-Qobayyat and Meniez, which represents 31 per cent of the total evaluation points. The top five villages account for 45 per cent of current tourism performance and relevance in the district, which highlights that there is a huge difference between top two performers and the rest of the villages in the district.

Top 5 Villages	Concentration (% total)
Al Qobayyat	19.62%
Menjez	12.18%
Aandaket	5.22%
Al Bireh	4.17%
Beino	4.17%
Total	45.37%

5.5.2 Donnieh

Minieh-Donnieh District	
DESCRIPTION	LOCATION
<p>Donnieh is an extension of Akkar wilderness and is a home to the highest plateau in Lebanon. This district is also an important area for migratory birds and hiking. Its natural environment is well preserved, which puts its attractiveness at serious risk. Several initiatives are being implemented in the area to protect the environment and to develop new ecotourism projects.</p>	
MAIN NATURAL SITES	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mrebine and Kfar Bbnine: Cedar tree forest proposed to be a nature reserve. - Wadi Jonaham: One of the deepest valleys in Lebanon and a potential hiking destination. - Highlands of Donnieh: Mountain destination (more than 2,000 meters), with high potential for soft adventure tourism (mountain biking, hiking, snowshoeing, and skiing). - Zod and Zahlan Caves: Natural caves open for public. - Ouyoun es-Samak Lakes: A hiking destination with mountain lakes that could become a network of hiking trails connecting lakes, communities, and forests. - Sfireh Pine Forest: Biggest pine forest in Lebanon and a hub for migratory birds. 	
MAIN CULTURAL SITES	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sfireh Temple: Second biggest temple in Lebanon. 	
INFRASTRUCTURE, SERVICES, AND MOBILITY	
<p>Donnieh has a good network of roads connecting it with the northern coastal areas as well as with other tourism destinations of the north. It is reachable by bus from Beirut and Tripoli, whereas internal transfers should take place by private transportations or taxis. Transfer within the area can be arranged by local tour operators when booked with them. All attractions in the district and surrounding villages are linked by a network of roads. Donnieh offers a wide range of lodging facilities ranging from hotels to guesthouses, lodges, chalets, and camping. It has also a wide variety of restaurants, bars, and fast-food vendors that offer Lebanese and international cuisine.</p>	
NATURE AND MOUNTAIN TOURISM ACTIVITIES AND SERVICES	
<p>One-day guided trips with a high focus on nature activities to Mrebine and Kfar Bbnine and Wadi Jonaham, and the Lebanon Mountain Trail. These areas are also part of one-week tourism programmes that are promoted by national ecotour operators focused on offering a nature tourism experience based on hiking.</p>	
ANALYSIS OF DONNIEH PERFORMANCE AND COMPETITIVENESS AS A TOURISM DESTINATION	
<p>The figure below shows the performance and competitiveness of Donnieh district as a tourism destination according to an evaluation from 1 (low) to 5 (high) of the different pillars described in section 5.2.</p> <p>The analysis concludes that Donnieh is still an emergent destination with not enough supply and attractiveness in general. It could act as an extension of Akkar area, given its proximity and complementarity of activities. Even though its hierarchy is relatively good compared to its supply performance and management, the destination is below the country average in all variables. Low tourism sector supply and performance and a lack of proper management indicate a small destination profile. However, there is good potential for low development activities, such as hiking, birdwatching, etc., but requires an updated legal framework for these activities and the landscapes to do them.</p>	

Minieh-Donnieh District




CONCENTRATION OF TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN DONNIEH

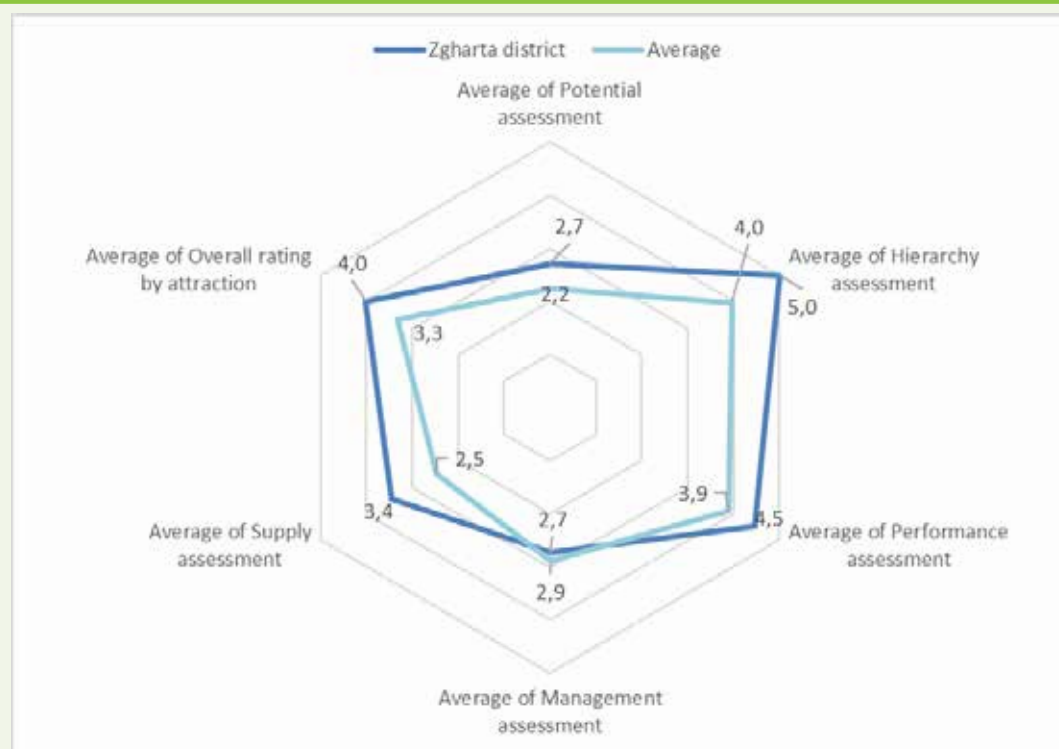
This table indicates the concentration of tourism development in Donnieh in terms of tourism demand, current performance, and tourism offer and attractiveness. Tourism in this district is mainly represented by the top five villages (Bqaasifrine, Qemmamine, Sir, Karm El Moher, Btormaz), which represent about half of the total assessment points. As noted above, the district is still underdeveloped for tourism, which is also expressed in the low concentration of activities, with several villages providing timid tourism offerings (9 out of 18 villages represent 77 per cent of all tourism assessment points).

Top 5 Villages	Concentration (% total)
Bqaasifrine	12.23%
Qemmamine	11.04%
Sir village	9.85%
Karm El Moher	8.71%
Btormaz	8.66%
Total	50.48%

5.5.3 Zgharta

Zgharta District	
DESCRIPTION	LOCATION
<p>A multifaceted destination for natural, culinary, and religious tourism, Zgharta offers many attractions, including a cedar reserve considered the benchmark of a natural ecosystem and biodiversity. Attractions are protected and highlighted, with the nature reserve the main attraction along with the highland.</p>	
MAIN NATURAL SITES	
<p>- Ehden Reserve and Ehden Highland: Highlands located at 1,500 meters ideal for trekking in summer and for skiing and snowshoeing in winter. Also, a destination for 4WD lovers.</p>	
<p>- Qozhaya Valley: Part of Qhadisha Valley, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. This territory hosts one of the monasteries of the valley.</p>	
<p>- Mazraet el Teffeh Waterfall: 100 meters waterfall suitable for canyoning and other soft adventure activities</p>	
MAIN CULTURAL SITES	
<p>- Saint Antonios – Kozhaya Monastery: An ancient monastery in Kozhaya Valley.</p>	
<p>- Ehden Churches: Including the oldest Maronite church in Lebanon</p>	
INFRASTRUCTURE, SERVICES, AND MOBILITY	
<p>Zgharta has a good network of roads connecting it with the northern coastal areas as well as with other tourism destinations of the north. It is reachable by bus from Beirut and Tripoli, whereas internal transfers should take place by private transportations or taxis. Transfer within the area can be arranged by local tour operators. All attractions in the district and surrounding villages are linked by a network of roads. Zgharta offers a wide range of lodging facilities ranging from hotels to guesthouses, lodges, chalets, and camping. It also has a wide variety of restaurants, bars, and fast-food vendors that offer Lebanese and international cuisine.</p>	
NATURE AND MOUNTAIN TOURISM ACTIVITIES AND SERVICES	
<p>One-day guided trips with a high focus on nature activities to Ehden Reserve and the Lebanon Mountain Trail. These areas are also part of tourism programmes of a one-week duration that are promoted by national ecotour operators focused on offering a tourism experience based on hiking. Ehden also has its own festivals known as Ehdeniyet, a yearly event promoting tourism in the area.</p>	
ANALYSIS OF ZGHARTA PERFORMANCE AND COMPETITIVENESS AS A TOURISM DESTINATION	
<p>The figure below shows the performance and competitiveness of Zgharta district as a tourism destination according to an evaluation from 1 (low) to 5 (high) of the different pillars described in section 5.2.</p>	
<p>The analysis shows that Zgharta has a high hierarchy of attractions linked to the UNESCO site of Qadisha, with good potential (above the national average) to continue its tourism development. Nevertheless, it is remarkable that its management organization is just at the national average, considering the level of its attractions – especially given the existence of the World Heritage Commission, though it is not operative. In general, tourism supply and performance are above the national average, but still with room to capitalize further on the potential and hierarchy of its attraction</p>	

Zgharta District




CONCENTRATION OF TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN ZGHARTA

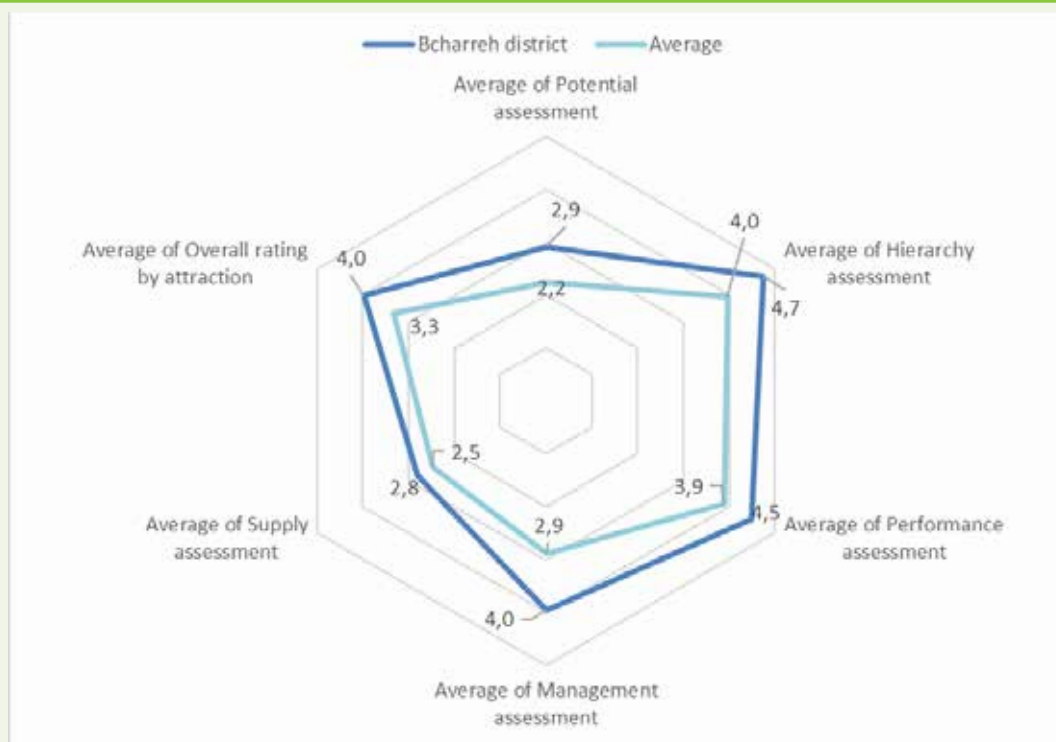
Zgharta district shows a strong concentration of tourism activities in Ehden village, with its high level of tourism activity, supply, performance, and attractiveness. The other villages have only a modest participation in tourism, despite their high potential for tourism development. Villages such as Aito, Sebaal, Mazraat El Touffah, Miziara and the Qadisha Valley itself have strong potential. As with other developed destinations such as Zgharta, there is one main city that is the primary attraction. The challenge is to diversify and make the tourism phenomenon an extensive activity throughout the district.

Top 5 Villages	Concentration (% total)
Ehden	37.16%
Aito	10.60%
Qadisha Valley (UNESCO World Heritage Site)	6.63%
Sebaal	6.03%
Miziara	5.95%
Total	66.36%

5.5.4 Bcharreh

Bcharreh District	
DESCRIPTION	LOCATION
<p>Bcharreh is the home of the UNESCO site, the Qadisha Valley, and the home of the famous writer and poet Gibran Khalil Gibran and of the Cedar of God Forest. The district offers a multitude of tourism attractions – from religious to cultural, as well as nature and adventure tourism. It is considered a year-round destination, attracting different profiles of visitors, from hikers and pilgrims willing to explore the Qadisha Valley, to alpine skiers and mountaineers willing to ascend the highest summit in Lebanon. The area also offers a wide network of lodging facilities.</p>	
MAIN NATURAL SITES	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Qadisha Valley: UNESCO World Heritage Site equipped with hiking trails. Well-known for hiking and trekking, but with potential also for religious tourism. - Cedar of GOD Forest: Oldest cedar forest in Bcharreh region at 2,000 meters. One of the most famous forests in Lebanon for hikers and nature lovers. - Jabal el Makmel & Kornet es Sawda: Highest Mountain plateau in Lebanon, with the highest summit in the Middle East: Kornet es Sawda, at 3,088 meters. A destination for hikers and soft adventurers. 	
MAIN CULTURAL SITES	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Qadisha Valley: The Qadisha Valley is one of the most important early Christian monastic settlements in the world. Its monasteries, many of which are of a great age, stand in dramatic positions in a rugged landscape. Nearby are the remains of the great forest of cedars of Lebanon, highly prized in antiquity for the construction of great religious buildings. - Cedars of GOD Forest: Vestige of extensive forests in Lebanon, where Christian monks of the monasteries of Qadicha Valley venerated the trees. 	
INFRASTRUCTURE, SERVICES, AND MOBILITY	
<p>An all-year destination, Bcharreh is accessible via the north, Batroun, and the Bekaa road districts. It is reachable by bus from Beirut, and all attractions within Bcharreh are connected and accessible. Internal transfer within Bcharreh can take place by public transportation, private cars, and taxis. The district offers a wide range of lodging facilities, including guesthouses, lodges, hotels, and chalets. Bcharreh also offers a diversity of restaurants, bars, and fast-food vendors providing Lebanese and international cuisine.</p>	
NATURE AND MOUNTAIN TOURISM ACTIVITIES AND SERVICES	
<p>Tourism in Bcharreh has been transitioning from being based only on winter alpine skiing to involving other types of activities, including nature and adventure tourism. Most of the accommodations and services in the district were developed around the ski area known as the Cedars area of Bcharreh. However, current infrastructure and facilities involve other areas based on hiking and adventure tourism. The main activities and services offered are day guiding trips with a high focus on hiking to Kornet es Sawda and the Qadisha Valley, skiing, camping, snowshoeing, paragliding, 4wd trips, snowmobiles, treks to Kornet es Sawda (the highest summit in Lebanon), rope courses, rappelling, rock climbing, and biking. Alpine and Nordic ski competitions are annual events promoted by local actors with international participation.</p>	
ANALYSIS OF BCHARREH PERFORMANCE AND COMPETITIVENESS AS A TOURISM DESTINATION	
<p>The figure below shows the performance and competitiveness of Bcharreh district as a tourism destination according to an evaluation from 1 (low) to 5 (high) of the different pillars described in section 5.2.</p> <p>The figure notes the district's high hierarchy of tourism attraction, mainly represented by the UNESCO site of Qadisha and the ski resort. It also has great potential for tourism development. This is one of the most attractive destinations of Lebanon, with high levels of national and international markets. Supply and performance are quite regular and slightly above the average. Tourism management assessment positions this district among the well managed in the Lebanon mountains, notably above the average.</p>	

Bcharreh District




CONCENTRATION OF TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN BCHARREH

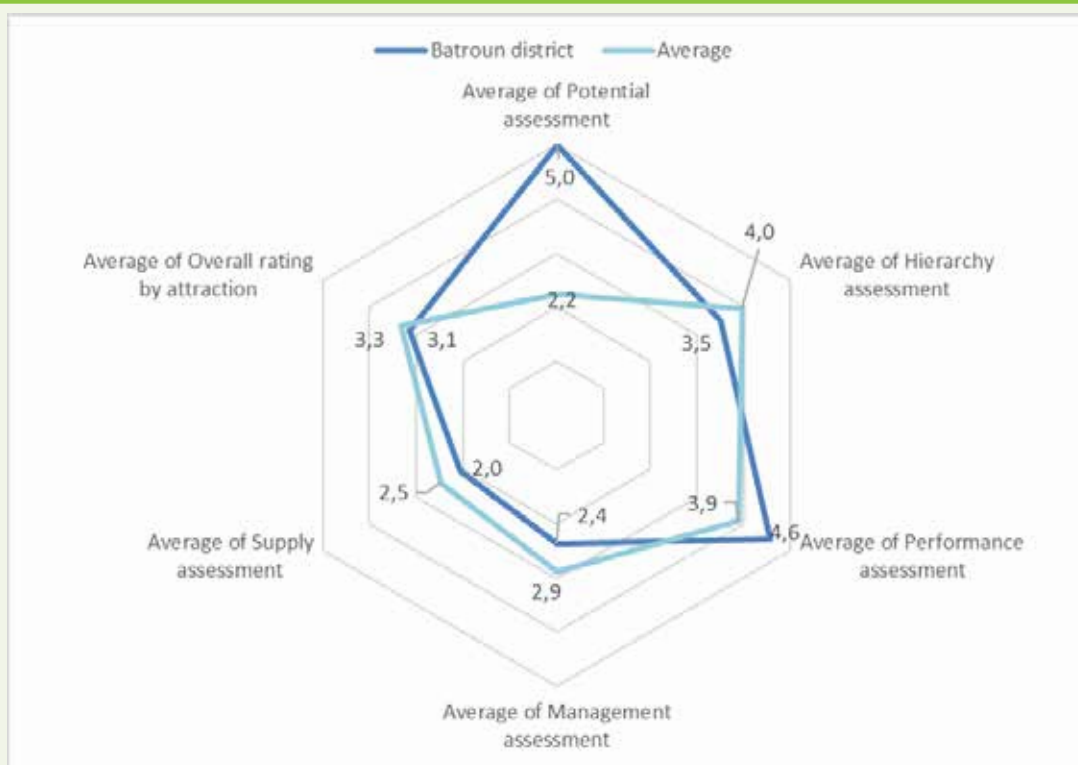
This district concentrates its tourism activity mainly in Bcharreh village and Hadath El Jobbeh. The top five villages represent almost 60 per cent of all tourism assessment points in terms of performance, supply, attractiveness, potential, and management. Nonetheless, there are still some villages with low supply, performance, and management but with high potential, such as Qannoubine and Al Dimane villages. Clearly, there is room to decentralize tourism activities throughout the district.

Top 5 Villages	Concentration (% total)
Bcharreh	23.12%
Hadath El Jobbeh	11.76%
Bqaa Kafra	8.58%
Hasroun	7.54%
Qnat	7.52%
Total	58.51%

5.5.5 Batroun

Batroun District	
DESCRIPTION	LOCATION
<p>A rich area combining nature, culture, and adventure. Batroun's main attractions are the Lebanese architecture of its houses, the old souk of Douma village, and the Baatara sinkhole with its 250 meters depth and unique geological formations. Batroun also has the biggest rock-climbing sector in the Middle East and has become one of the main hiking hubs of the region, connecting many mountain trails.</p>	
MAIN NATURAL SITES	
<p>Three Bridges Sinkhole: 250 meters depth sinkhole, known as Balouu Baatara. It is a unique and popular geological formation.</p> <p>Kfaerhelda Waterfall: Remarkable waterfall during the snow melt season (spring).</p> <p>Tannourine Cedar Forest: One of the largest and densest cedar forests in Lebanon, with multiple options to hike in the area. The protection of the forest is mainly due to the land mines spread during the 1975 civil war, which left the forest untouched for decades. Since the removal of the mines, it has become a nature reserve.</p> <p>Tannourine Climbing Sector: The biggest rock-climbing sector in Lebanon and the Middle East.</p>	
MAIN CULTURAL SITES	
<p>Douma Town and Souk: Popular and typical Lebanese village with reed roof houses and an old souk and cinema.</p> <p>Mseilha Fortress: Fortification dating from the 17th century to guard the route from Tripoli to Beirut.</p>	
INFRASTRUCTURE, SERVICES, AND MOBILITY	
<p>Geographically linked to Byblos and Bcharreh, the Batroun district is easily reachable. Attractions within the district are all accessible. Internal roads and transfers are considered easy to navigate in private cars, but otherwise the visitor needs the help of private taxis to go from one village to the next. Upper Batroun accommodations are in Douma and Tannourine, and include guesthouses, Maison de Charme, lodges, hotels, and campsite. Hiking trails are spread across the district covering natural landmarks.</p>	
NATURE AND MOUNTAIN TOURISM ACTIVITIES AND SERVICES	
<p>Summer activities and tourism services are focused on guided daytrips in the Tannourine reserve, Bechaaleh trails, Douma side trails, and the Lebanon Mountain Trail. Winter activities are snowshoeing and skiing. Regarding soft adventure tourism, some activities are offered such as rappelling, rock climbing, and biking. It is worth noting that Tannourine has the biggest rock-climbing sector in Lebanon and the Middle East.</p>	
ANALYSIS OF BATROUN PERFORMANCE AND COMPETITIVENESS AS A TOURISM DESTINATION	
<p>The figure below shows the performance and competitiveness of Batroun district as a tourism destination according to an evaluation from 1 (low) to 5 (high) of the different pillars described in section 5.2.</p> <p>Batroun tourism assessment is remarkably high in potential and performance variables. It is outstanding in its current hierarchy to attract national and international markets, its potential to continue to develop tourism, its accessibility from Beirut and the Lebanese main markets, its safety, and the quality of its supply. The district has a diversity of historical and religious tourism, soft adventure, as well as cultural and gastronomic offerings. In terms of supply and management, it is at the average level of all other districts. Despite its quality and diversified tourism offerings, it is not completely promoted to its potential.</p>	

Batroun District




CONCENTRATION OF TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN BATROUN

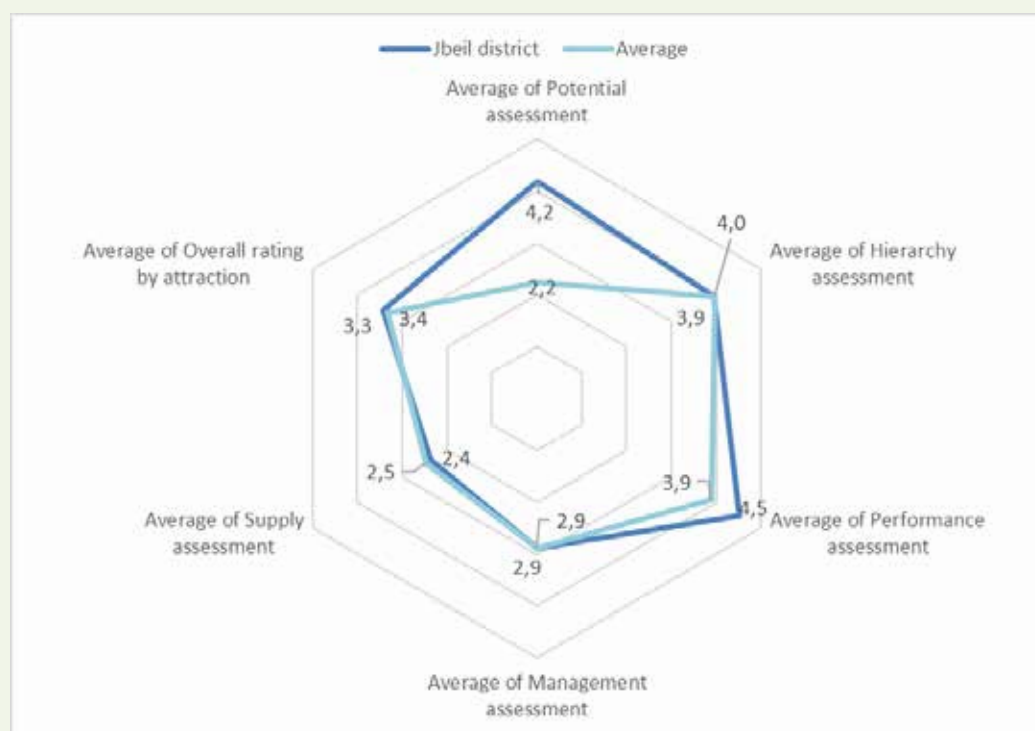
Due to its proximity to big domestic markets (Byblos, Tripoli, Beirut) and to international ones through Beirut, as well as being itself densely populated, Batroun offers a wide variety of tourism options throughout the whole district. The top five villages represent just 37 per cent of the district's tourism.

Top 5 Villages	Concentration (% total)
Tannourine	9.64%
Douma	8.28%
Bchaaleh	7.79%
Kfifane	6.13%
Hardine	5.56%
Total	37.40%

5.5.6 Jbeil

Jbeil District	
DESCRIPTION	LOCATION
<p>A multifaceted area offering cultural, religious, and natural attractions, the district's proximity to Beirut attracts a wide range of visitors (hikers, pilgrims, climbers, ecotourists, skiers, etc.) while offering several accommodation possibilities in the area.</p>	
MAIN NATURAL SITES	
<p>Jbeil is one of the most popular hiking destinations in Lebanon thanks to a network of mountain trails that connect forests and other natural areas with surrounding villages. Some of the most relevant spots in the area are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bentael Pine Reserve: The only pine and oak reserve in Lebanon with 10 km of hiking trails and equipped with rope course activities. - Ehmej Iron Oak Forest & Hiking Trails: Ehmej offers 17 hiking trails for 196 km, and two of them cross this iron oak forest. This is the only iron oak forest in Mount Lebanon. - Laqlouq Mountains & Ski Station: Ski resort in the upper district. - Afqa cave, waterfall, and temple: The cave is one of the deepest in Lebanon, with 5.5 km distance. It can be combined with a route that visits the Afqa temple and the waterfall. 	
MAIN CULTURAL SITES	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Byblos Citadel & Souk: An ancient city and well visited site in almost all tourism tours. - Afqa Temple: Temple associated with the cult of Aphrodite and Adonis. Located in the mountains of Jbeil, next to the cave and waterfall. - Mar Maroun Annaya & Saint Charbel Shrine: The most known and visited Christian Maronite shrine in Lebanon. - Aqoura Churches: A village known for its old churches and the most important, Saint Peter and Paul, which used to be a Roman tomb. 	
INFRASTRUCTURE, SERVICES, AND MOBILITY	
<p>Jbeil' coastal roads are well maintained till the Ehmej village. From that point crossing to Aqoura, Afqa, and Lessa the road becomes bumpy and badly maintained. The attractions within the district are accessible. A new public bus network has been introduced in October 2021, connecting the villages of the districts. For more flexible movement in the district, one needs a private transfer to access the sites. The area offers a wide network of hiking trails. Accommodation facilities and restaurants are mainly concentrated in coastal areas. Services in mountain areas are centralized mostly in guesthouses, which also serve food to visitors.</p>	
NATURE AND MOUNTAIN TOURISM ACTIVITIES AND SERVICES	
<p>Most popular tourism activities and services offered are hiking in the Jaj Reserve, on Ehmej local trails, and on the side trail of the Lebanon Mountain Trail; camping; snowshoeing; rappelling; rock climbing in Afqa; and caving and agritourism in Aqoura. Aqoura is known and visited during the apple and cherry-picking season when you can pick and buy your own fruits. Ehmej has also a farm that offers agritourism activities for children and families. It is important to highlight that most tourism services and facilities in Jbeil are concentrated on the coast, next to the old city – a UNESCO Heritage Site.</p>	
ANALYSIS OF JBEIL PERFORMANCE AND COMPETITIVENESS AS A TOURISM DESTINATION	
<p>The figure below shows the performance and competitiveness of Jbeil district as a tourism destination according to an evaluation from 1 (low) to 5 (high) of the different pillars described in section 5.2.</p> <p>Its situation is like that of Batroun in terms of potential and performance. Its hierarchy of attractions, management, and supply levels are average. It has high levels of quality, diversity of supply and experiences, and proximity to main domestic markets and Beirut (for international visitors).</p>	

Jbeil District




CONCENTRATION OF TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN JBEIL

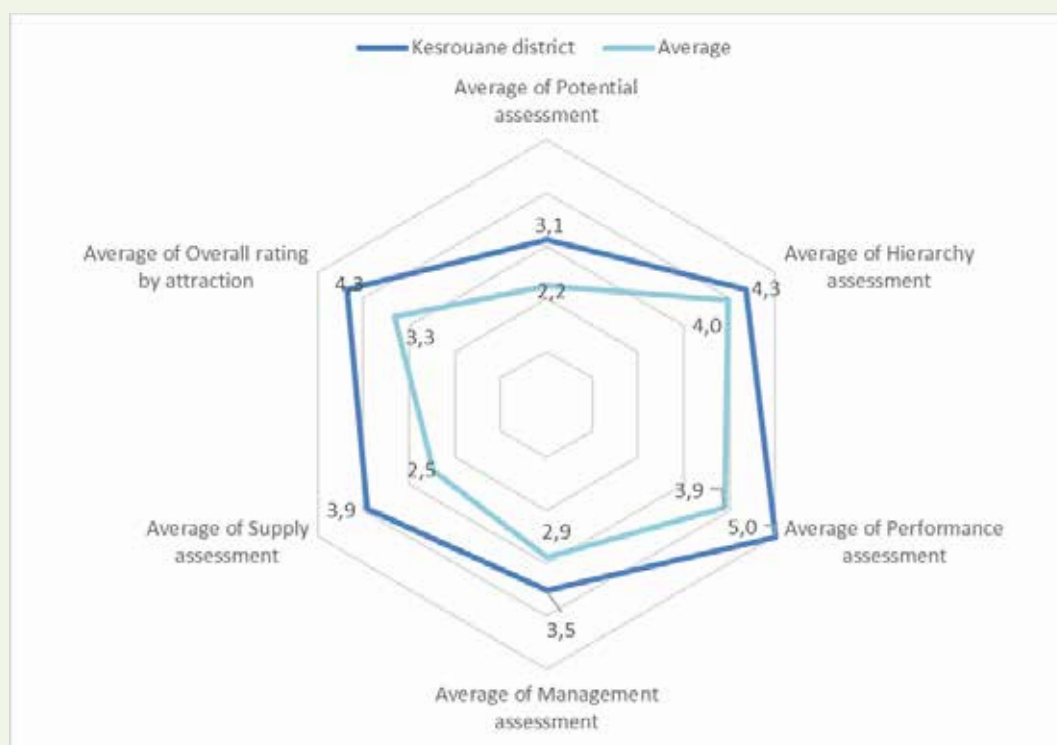
Like Batroun, Jbeil offers a wide variety of tourism activities throughout the whole district. The top five villages represent almost 37 per cent of the district's tourism, most notably Ehmej. Nevertheless, there are other important villages with great potential but with low supply and performance, such as Afqa, Laqlouq, and Aqoura.

Top 5 Villages	Concentration (% total)
Ehmej	14.31%
Akoura	8.34%
Laklouk plateau and highlands	5.36%
Hakel	4.26%
Ghalboun	4.21%
Total	36.48

5.5.7 Keserwan

Keserwan District	
DESCRIPTION	LOCATION
<p>Keserwan is a highly developed district offering a wide range of attractions and tourism trends, including the most developed ski resort in the Middle East, a wide network of approximately 160 km of hiking trails, Roman temples, and many other cultural attractions that are preserved and highlighted on the tourism map. The district is considered an all-year destination with a variety of accommodations and tourism offerings.</p>	
MAIN NATURAL SITES	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Jabal Mousa Biosphere Reserve: It presents a rich cultural and natural heritage. It is a home to at least 727 flora species, of which 26 are endemic to Lebanon and six to Jabal Moussa. It is also an important migratory area for birds. - Keserwan Trails: A network of hiking trails and the biggest ski domain in the Middle East, offering a multitude of adventure activities - Baskinta Literary Trail: Being part of the Lebanese Mountain Trail, the Baskinta Literary Trail offers a 24 km hike through different landmarks related to poets and novelists. - Jeiita Cave: The deepest cave in Lebanon, with 9 km distance. - Kfardebian Ski Resort: Possibly the biggest and best ski resort of the Middle East. 	
MAIN CULTURAL SITES	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Jabal Mousa: Apart from its natural beauty, Jabal Mousa offers visitors the possibility to enjoy traditional old houses in the mountains, El Dei ruins, and Roman stairs. - Al Mashnaqa: A Roman altar of great beauty, located on the sacred road from Byblos to Afqa and surrounded by nature. 	
INFRASTRUCTURE, SERVICES, AND MOBILITY	
<p>An all-season destination, Keserwan is accessible all year long since even in winter roads are open to access the ski area in Kfardebian. Keserwan has 160 km of hiking trails covering several destinations, the most known the Jabal Moussa Biosphere Reserve. There is a wide range of accommodations, including hotels, lodges, campsites, guesthouses, and monasteries. Restaurants and bars are widely available and serve Lebanese and international cuisine. Most of these services are located around the ski area.</p>	
NATURE AND MOUNTAIN TOURISM ACTIVITIES AND SERVICES	
<p>National tour operators and local guides mainly offer one-day guided trips focused on hiking in Wadi el Salib, on the Lebanon Mountain Trail crossing from Faraya to Kfardebian, and hiking to Mzar summit. Other activities include cultural visits to Afqa Temple and religious visits to Saint Charbel Status. In wintertime the area offers the opportunity to practice alpine skiing, snowshoeing, and back county skiing to Mzar and Sannine, as well as snowmobile trips.</p>	
ANALYSIS OF KESERWAN PERFORMANCE AND COMPETITIVENESS AS A TOURISM DESTINATION	
<p>The figure below shows the performance and competitiveness of Keserwan district as a tourism destination according to an evaluation from 1 (low) to 5 (high) of the different pillars described in section 5.2.</p> <p>Keserwan is one of the best positioned tourism districts in Lebanon. It is located quite near Beirut and is home to two important destinations: the Kfardebian ski resort and the Jabal Mousa Biosphere Reserve. It is consolidated and balanced in terms of tourism attractiveness (potential and hierarchy) and the supply capacity to serve it (supply, performance, and management). In all variables the tourism assessment is above average. Its high attractiveness supported by the ski resort positions the district in the regional markets. As a year-round destination, its path to grow tourism is by providing additional activities and experiences, specially out of the winter season.</p>	

Keserwan District




CONCENTRATION OF TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN KESERWAN

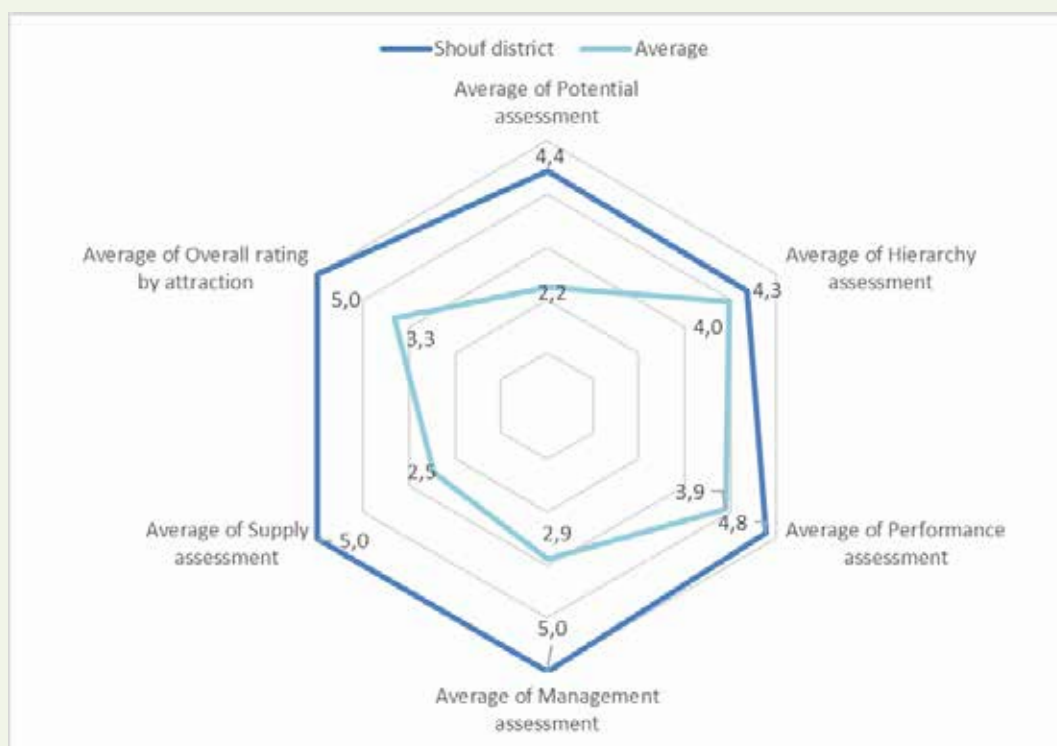
Kfardebian and Daraoun-Harissa stand out because of their strong association with specific tourism types: ski and religious tourism. Together, they represent a fourth of all tourism in the district. Other important tourism villages are also linked to skiing or are in some way benefited by the ski resort.

Top 5 Villages	Concentration (% total)
Kfardebian	14.16%
Darauoun-Harissa	10.48%
Faraya	5.97%
Dlebta	5.24%
Yahchouch	4.48%
Total	40.33%

5.5.8 Chouf

Chouf District	
DESCRIPTION	LOCATION
<p>The Chouf area is well known for its history and culture and is home to three connected biosphere reserves. Chouf is also home to several significant cultural locations, such as Beit ed Dine, Deir el Qamar, and Qasr Moussa. This district is the best positioned in all Lebanon for ecotourism since its attractions are well highlighted and preserved. The Chouf Biosphere Reserve has been able to position rural and ecotourism as its main vector of tourism development, in the highland villages.</p>	
MAIN NATURAL SITES	
<p>- Chouf Cedar Forest: UNESCO Biosphere Reserve considered the largest and most structured reserve in Lebanon, covering four entrances. Trails in the Chouf area cover 400 km distance. These cedar forests account for a quarter of the remaining cedar forest in Lebanon, and some trees are estimated to be 2,000 years old. The size of the reserve makes it a good location for the conservation of medium-sized mammals, such as the wolf and the Lebanese jungle cat, as well as various species of mountain animals and plants.</p> <p>- Niha Reserve: UNESCO Biosphere Reserve. It is one of the four entrances of the Chouf Biosphere Reserve.</p>	
MAIN CULTURAL SITES	
<p>- Shoulf Cedar Forest: The Chouf area is very rich in archaeological and architectural remains that are a witness to the history of these mountains and to the ethnic mix of the inhabitants of Mount Lebanon.</p> <p>- Deir el Qamar & Beit ed Dine Palace: The Beit ed Dine complex is Lebanon's best example of early 19th century Lebanese architecture. Beit ed Dine Castle is the official residence of the president.</p>	
INFRASTRUCTURE, SERVICES, AND MOBILITY	
<p>Chouf is in the center of the country and is reachable from different locations. It is accessible from Beirut, the Matn, the Bekaa, and the south. It is possible to access the Barouk reserve by car, where you can drive for 5 km inside the reserve area. The Chouf area has developed a wide network of hiking trails covering the three nature reserves and the surrounding villages. The area offers a wide range of lodgings and food services, including guesthouses, hotels, and camping grounds.</p>	
NATURE AND MOUNTAIN TOURISM ACTIVITIES AND SERVICES	
<p>The Chouf area is considered the most developed ecotourism destination in Lebanon. It is well structured, offering a wide range of services and facilities. The UNESCO Biosphere Reserve offers many activities and services, such as hiking inside the forest and in the biosphere area with trained local guides, horseback riding, birdwatching, culinary sessions, and handcrafts visits.</p>	
ANALYSIS OF CHOUF PERFORMANCE AND COMPETITIVENESS AS A TOURISM DESTINATION	
<p>The figure below shows the performance and competitiveness of Chouf district as a tourism destination according to an evaluation from 1 (low) to 5 (high) of the different pillars described in section 5.2.</p> <p>This district stands out as the top performer in tourism assessment. It has the best local management, currently linked to the Biosphere Reserve. It also has one of the best supply and performance ratings, as well as hierarchy. Additionally, the district still has the potential to continue its tourism development. It is relatively close to Beirut, and it is well positioned internationally because of its good management of the Biosphere Reserve.</p>	

Chouf District



CONCENTRATION OF TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN CHOUF

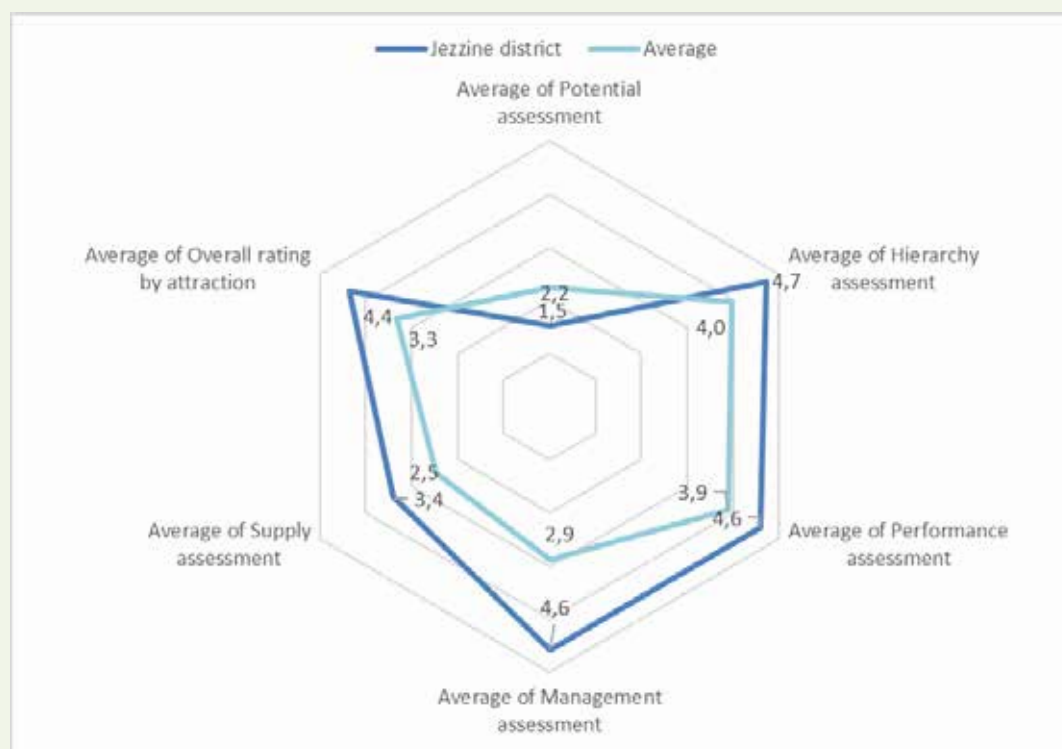
Deir el Qamar Village is a key destination for the Chouf district, either because of its urban beauty or its proximity to the Beitiddine Palace. Another seven villages represent about 40–45 per cent of the district's tourism, including the rest of the top five listed below, or (alternatively) Niha, Maasser El Chouf, Barouk, and other mountain villages, which have great potential but low supply and development.

Top 5 Villages	Concentration (% total)
Deir El Qamar	14.03%
Baaqline	8.57%
Baadarane	7.85%
Beit Eddine	7.01%
Al Moukhtara	6.66%
Total	44.12%

5.5.9 Jezzine

Jezzine District	
DESCRIPTION	LOCATION
<p>Jezzine is a town located 40 km south of Beirut, surrounded by mountain peaks and pine forests. It is the main summer resort and tourist destination of south Lebanon. The town is also known as the “town of waterfalls,” because of the popular Jezzine Falls. The destination is also known for its souk and the production of handmade cutlery.</p>	
MAIN NATURAL SITES	
<p>- Jezzine Waterfall: One of the highest waterfalls in Lebanon and in the Middle East (90 m). One of the main nature destinations for locals and foreigners, it is located on the edge of the town and falls into the valley below.</p> <p>- Bksassine Pine Forest: The largest pine forest in the Middle East, home to around 170 species and 70 medicinal plants. It is possible to take a trail around two cliffs and Niha Fort with breath-taking views of Wadi Jezzine and Bisri Valley.</p>	
MAIN CULTURAL SITES	
<p>- Serhal Palace: Magnificent palace built in 1956 for the poet and artist Joseph Matar.</p> <p>- Jezzine Souk: Ideal place to discover the many craft shops selling the region’s most famous traditional cutlery.</p>	
INFRASTRUCTURE, SERVICES, AND MOBILITY	
<p>Jezzine relates to both the mountains and the coast, and it is easily accessible from the Chouf area, from the coast via Sidon, and from the south and the Bekaa. Roads to Jezzine are in a good condition. Travelling internally is easy for visitors coming in their private cars. Attractions are located close to one another. Jezzine has several types of accommodations: hotels, lodges, chalets, camping, and guesthouses.</p>	
NATURE AND MOUNTAIN TOURISM ACTIVITIES AND SERVICES	
<p>The primary nature tourism activities offered in the district’s mountain areas are hiking in Jezzine and on the Lebanon Mountain Trail, camping, canyoning in Azibe, and biking and rope courses. Jezzine also offers travellers the culinary experience of tasting a Lebanese Mankousheh (flatbread topped with thyme, cheese, or ground meat) baked in a wood oven.</p>	
ANALYSIS OF JEZZINE PERFORMANCE AND COMPETITIVENESS AS A TOURISM DESTINATION	
<p>The figure below shows the performance and competitiveness of Jezzine district as a tourism destination according to an evaluation from 1 (low) to 5 (high) of the different pillars described in section 5.2.</p> <p>Even though the district’s potential index is below the average, Jezzine district is the second-best performer in the Lebanon mountains. It has high quality assets, with great hierarchy. This district is easy to reach, which – in general terms and combined with its quality assets – increase its potential to attract more demand. It has the potential to create itineraries and experiences. Its below average index is due to the low quantity of its tourism assets, which reduces its options and potential to diversify and continue developing tourism. Tourism development management is one of the key strengths in this district and one of the best in Lebanon, which helps to envisage good prospects for tourism development.</p>	

Jezzine District




CONCENTRATION OF TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN JEZZINE

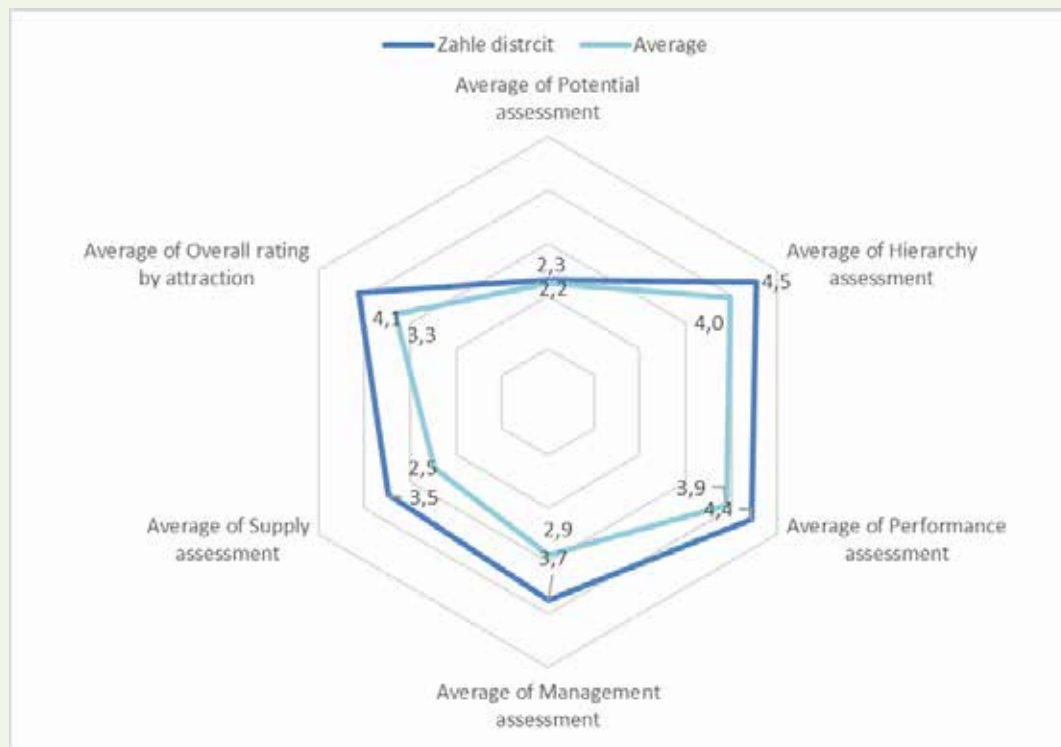
The district's tourism is strongly concentrated in or around Jezzine village, which represents about a third of the total tourism attractiveness and supply. Another third is consolidated in the rest of the top five villages. All in all, it is one of the most tourism concentrated districts. The challenge, then, is to decentralize tourism. The good management conditions in this district suggest there are good prospects for it to meet that challenge.

Top 5 Villages	Concentration (% total)
Jezzine	30.81%
Kfarhouna	11.86%
Bkassine	11.82%
Al Qattine	7.06%
Al Rihane	5.84%
Total	67.39%

5.5.10 Zahle

Zahle District	
DESCRIPTION	LOCATION
<p>Zahlé is an administrative district of the Bekaa Governorate, with a capital of the same name. A red-roofed town set among the eastern foothills of Mount Sannine, it is known as the “Bride of the Bekaa” or the “city of Wine and Poetry.” It represents 42 per cent of Lebanon’s territory and is 54 km from Beirut. The Zahle capital city is the third largest city in the country.</p>	
MAIN NATURAL SITES	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Wadi el Habis: With ancient tombs and ruins - Taanayel Farms: An agritourism site - Kfar Zabad: With ruins and a cave of about 120 m long for experts 	
MAIN CULTURAL SITES	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Architecture Expressions: Such as the Serail and Kadri Hotel, as well as other buildings. Zahle city is well known as a red-roofed city. - Intellectual lifestyle and relaxing areas: City of Zahle is known as a cultural and intellectual center, with many writers and poets born there in the last century, and with a yearly poetry event. The city is built along the Berdawni River with a wooded gorge, providing a nice atmosphere to walk around. - Traditional Old Souks: Such as Souk al-Blatt and Haoush El-Zaraani. - Wineries & Ksara Winery: There are many vineyards in the area, and Ksara Winery has an underground cellar built from Roman times. - Vine and Flower Festivals 	
INFRASTRUCTURE, SERVICES, AND MOBILITY	
<p>It is easily accessible from the main crossroads of Lebanon, connecting Beirut with Damascus (Siria) and the north and south of the Bekaa Valley. It can be reached from Beirut, Sofar, and Chtaura or from Dhour-Choueir, Aintoura, and Tarshish. Its connectivity with Beirut is open all year round, even in winter.</p>	
NATURE AND MOUNTAIN TOURISM ACTIVITIES AND SERVICES	
<p>Activities are linked tightly to the farming life and the cultural assets of the city. The fresh atmosphere produced by the Berdawni River, and gorge is the main driver that attracts the intellectual life and visitors seeking relaxation. The district’s natural assets are mainly associated with wine tourism and agritourism activities. Natural areas often have cultural value as well.</p>	
ANALYSIS OF ZAHLE PERFORMANCE AND COMPETITIVENESS AS A TOURISM DESTINATION	
<p>The figure below shows the performance and competitiveness of Zahle district as a tourism destination according to an evaluation from 1 (low) to 5 (high) of the different pillars described in section 5.2.</p> <p>Zahle could be considered the average expression of the tourism situation in the Lebanese Mountains. Its assessment is slightly above the average in all variables but balanced to the general situation of all Lebanese destinations. The city atmosphere and its historical links with wine give the city the potential to develop even more wine tourism and to position itself among international itineraries.</p>	

Zahle District




CONCENTRATION OF TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN ZAHLE

Tourism is highly concentrated in Zahle city (37 per cent), with the remaining top five cities representing 74 per cent, and with just the two top cities representing slightly more than half of all tourism in the district.

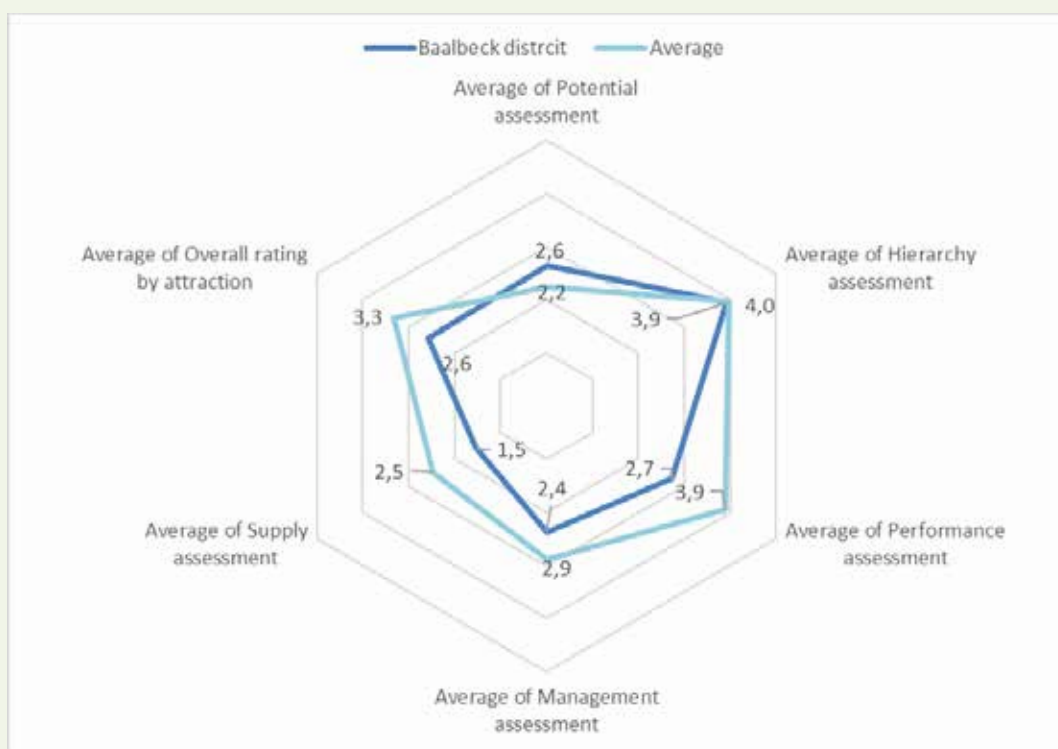
Top 5 Villages	Concentration (% total)
Zahle	37.40%
Qab Elias	13.88%
Anjar	11.06%
Taanayel	6.43%
Riyah	5.27%
Total	74.04%

5.5.11 Baalbeck

Baalbeck District	
DESCRIPTION	LOCATION
<p>Baalbeck is an administrative district in the Baalbeck-Hermel Governorate, having the city Baalbeck as its capital. It is by far the largest district in the country. Baalbeck is located on two main historic trade routes: one between the Mediterranean coast and the Syrian interior, and the other between northern Syria and northern Palestine. The city is located 85 km from Beirut and is an important administrative and economic center in the northern Bekaa Valley.</p>	
MAIN NATURAL SITES	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ainata Trails: Around the Ainata village in a high mountain area. Has strong potential for soft adventure. - Mamleket El Lezzeb: A juniper forest. - Deir El Ahmar: Known for its oak forest and trails. - Yammouineh Nature Reserve: Home to water springs and a lake. - Wineries: Notably Chateau Barqa and Couvent Rouge. 	
MAIN CULTURAL SITES	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Baalbeck Monumental Temples: Lebanon's greatest Roman treasure. It is the largest and most noble Roman temple ever built and it is among the best preserved. - The Great Mosque & Sit Khawla Mausoleum: The shrine of Sayyida Khawla, the daughter of Imam Hussein. - Public Buildings at Boustan El-Khan: The remains of public baths, markets, and assembly place. - Quarries: Stones to build the temples were cut in situ, with monumental monoliths. They are at the southern entrance of the town, in Al Kiyal and Qoubbat Douris. - Culture & Intellectual Lifestyle: The Bohemian lifestyle of the city has been a tradition, though it is declining over time. - Saydet Bechwat: A pilgrimage temple with strong veneration of the Virgin Mary - The Baalbeck International Festival: Launched in 1956, it is one of the most prestigious annual festivals in Lebanon and in the whole region. Combines music, dance, theatre, sound, and light shows. From early July to mid-August. 	
INFRASTRUCTURE, SERVICES, AND MOBILITY	
<p>The area is well connected to the southern and northern Bekaa Valley. It reaches Beirut or Damascus (Syria) mainly through Zahle. Other ways across the mountain range are available with different levels of maintenance, but some of them close in winter because of snow. There is good public transport to connect Baalbeck with Beirut, Byblos, and Tripoli.</p>	
NATURE AND MOUNTAIN TOURISM ACTIVITIES AND SERVICES	
<p>The activities in the district are mainly linked with Roman and archaeological ruins around Baalbeck. Additionally, there is a strong religious connection with the Saydet Bechouat temple. Nature-based activities are just starting to emerge in the Deir Al Ahmar area.</p>	
ANALYSIS OF BAALBECK PERFORMANCE AND COMPETITIVENESS AS A TOURISM DESTINATION	
<p>The figure below shows the performance and competitiveness of Baalbeck district as a tourism destination according to an evaluation from 1 (low) to 5 (high) of the different pillars described in section 5.2.</p>	

Baalbeck District

This district has strong assets in general, mainly because of their hierarchy (World Heritage and others). The availability and potential of assets is slightly above the average, providing room to continue developing tourism experiences. Nevertheless, there is a lack of supply quantity and quality to boost tourism in the area. Furthermore, tourism has increased organically, especially around the Roman temples, indirectly preventing the opening of new tourism products or areas of visitation. There is still room to strengthen management in the Baalbeck and Deir el Ahmar areas.




CONCENTRATION OF TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN BAALBECK

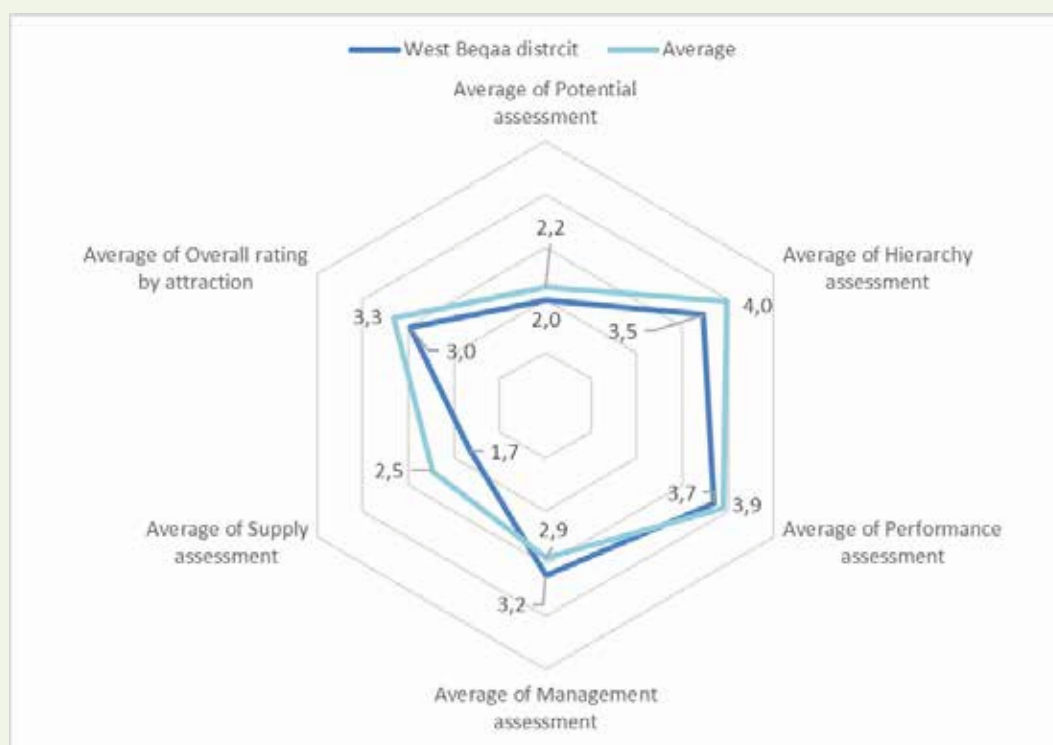
Tourism is concentrated around Baalbeck village because of the Roman temples. Nevertheless, there are other emerging destinations that could capitalize on activities to open new areas for tourism, particularly for rural tourism and soft adventures for family and friends. Ras Baalbeck, Deir El Ahmar, and Yammouneh could act as new tourism hubs for the development of local activities.

Top 5 Villages	Concentration (% total)
Baalbeck	21.86%
Ras Baalbeck	14.36%
Deir El Ahmar	8.92%
Iaat	5.63%
Yammouneh	5.35%
Total	56.12%

5.5.12 West Bekaa

West Bekaa District	
DESCRIPTION	LOCATION
<p>Western Bekaa is an administrative district in the Bekaa Governorate. The capital is Joub Jannine, which has a population of 12,000. It is a wide district in the southern area of the Bekaa Valley, with a myriad of small towns and villages. It is a traditional agriculture territory, and in the south, it has the Qaraoun Dam.</p>	
MAIN NATURAL SITES	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Nature- Based Tourism Assets: 17 tourism assets have been assessed. - Lebanon Mountain Trail: Section 23. - Aammiq Wetland & Farms: Many opportunities for migratory birdwatching and farm tourism. - Al Mansoura Lake, Ain Zebdeh and Al Manara Springs: For recreational tourism - Al Qaraoun Lake: For leisure activities. 	
MAIN CULTURAL SITES	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Wineries: Great potential to create and consolidate the wine tourism route of Lebanon. About 40 wineries in this area, such as Chateau Kefraya, Terre Joie, Cave Kouroum, Chateau St Thomas, Qanafar, and La Tourba, all well connected with Zahle. - Dabr El Karam Food Trail: West Bekaa specialty preserved foods and dishes. - Al Tawbeh: Ancient cave and inscriptions. 	
INFRASTRUCTURE, SERVICES, AND MOBILITY	
<p>The area is wide open, with very good roads connecting all the small villages. Energy is well provided locally. It is well connected with Chouf Reserve, which could act as a good leverage to connect the district to tourism itineraries.</p>	
NATURE AND MOUNTAIN TOURISM ACTIVITIES AND SERVICES	
<p>Even though this is an emerging destination, most activities are for leisure or soft adventure. There is a wide potential to develop and consolidate a wine tourism route, as well as to develop cuisine experiences based on local agriculture production and leveraged by wine matchings.</p>	
ANALYSIS OF WEST BEKAA PERFORMANCE AND COMPETITIVENESS AS A TOURISM DESTINATION	
<p>The figure below shows the performance and competitiveness of West Bekaa district as a tourism destination according to an evaluation from 1 (low) to 5 (high) of the different pillars described in section 5.2.</p> <p>This district is still underdeveloped in terms of tourism options. It has significant potential to develop soft adventure activities, ecotourism-based activities, and easy farm tourism, as well as to develop culinary tourism – and to leverage all the destinations with international wine tourism. There are many areas to offer low intensity activities for family and friends, but there is the need to consolidate management to boost the destination to a higher level.</p>	

West Bekaa District




CONCENTRATION OF TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN WEST BEKAA

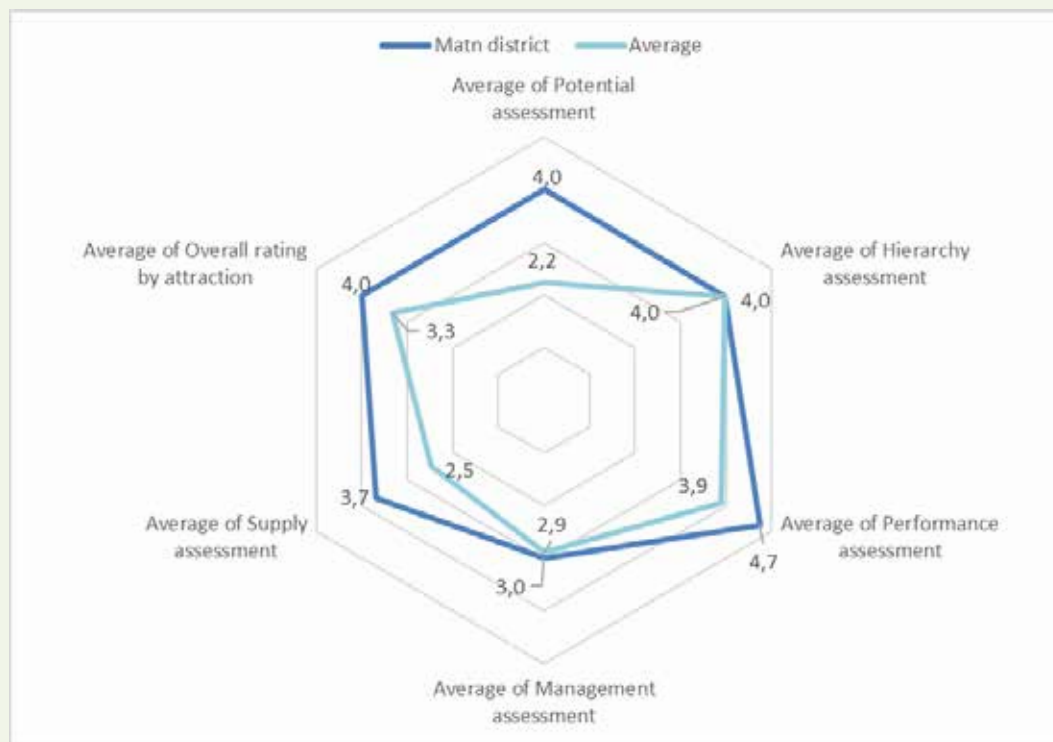
Kherbet Qanafar village has the greatest concentration of tourism activities, attraction, and supply, followed by Aammiq village. The top five villages represent 57 per cent of all tourism. The challenge is to enhance the tourism benefits for other villages in the district.

Top 5 Villages	Concentration (% total)
Kherbet Qanafar	20.13%
Aammiq	12.66%
Saghbine	9.99%
Aaitanit	7.48%
Machghara	6.62%
Total	56.88%

5.5.13 Matn

Matn District	
DESCRIPTION	LOCATION
<p>Matn is a district in the Mount Lebanon Governorate, east of Beirut. The district capital is Jdeideh. It is one of the most popular areas in Lebanon, with rich scenery and splendid views of the Mediterranean. Matn's population is almost entirely Christian, with some Druze and Shias in the region. Its location and population provide many architectural assets, monuments, churches, and traditional and old houses. It also has the closest ski resort to Beirut.</p>	
MAIN NATURAL SITES	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lebanon Mountain Trail sections 15, 16 - Al Zaarour: ski slopes. - Mount Sannine: summit. - Qanat Bakish: mountain plateau. - Forests: Al Marj pine forest, Al Khinchara pine forest and hiking trails, Al Mtein pine forest, Dhour El Choueir pine forest and hiking trail, Beit Merry pine forest, Al Naas pine forest. 	
MAIN CULTURAL SITES	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lebanon Mountain Trail & Baskinta Literary Trail - Qanat Bakish Cross - Traditional Houses: Al Khinchara, Al Mtein, Baskinta, Beit Chabeb, Bikfaya, Dhour El Choueir, and others. - Monasteries, Old Churches, Palaces, & Serails: Mar Youhanna, Al Khinchara, Mar Takla, Al Mtein, Mar Mikhael, and Mar Antonios ancient monasteries; Abi El Lamaa old palace and serial, and others. - Wineries & Food Preparation Workshops: Mar Youhanna monastery winery, old grape press, Riachi Winery, and spirits, Khinchara sweet bread specialties, Ardoum winery, Al Mtein silk factory, Matn specialty preserved food and dishes, Sarcophagi, and ancient press, etc. - Baskinta: Apple festival. - Beit Chabeb: Bell-making craft. 	
INFRASTRUCTURE, SERVICES, AND MOBILITY	
<p>This district is one of the closest to Beirut. It is well connected to the capital and has a road crossing over the mountains to the Bekaa Valley, arriving directly at Zahle. Its proximity to the capital city provides many urban services and mobility.</p>	
NATURE AND MOUNTAIN TOURISM ACTIVITIES AND SERVICES	
<p>Activities are mainly leisure linked with historical or traditional buildings or urban areas. In the higher mountains there is the possibility for soft adventure and ski activities.</p>	
ANALYSIS OF MATN PERFORMANCE AND COMPETITIVENESS AS A TOURISM DESTINATION	
<p>The figure below shows the performance and competitiveness of Matn district as a tourism destination according to an evaluation from 1 (low) to 5 (high) of the different pillars described in section 5.2.</p> <p>The amount of assets and the concentration of population and administrative institutions provide a good management platform. Services and supply act to serve the same district as well as Beirut, because of its proximity. There is still room to develop experiences, with a high hierarchy and potential of assets available.</p>	

Matn District




CONCENTRATION OF TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN MATN

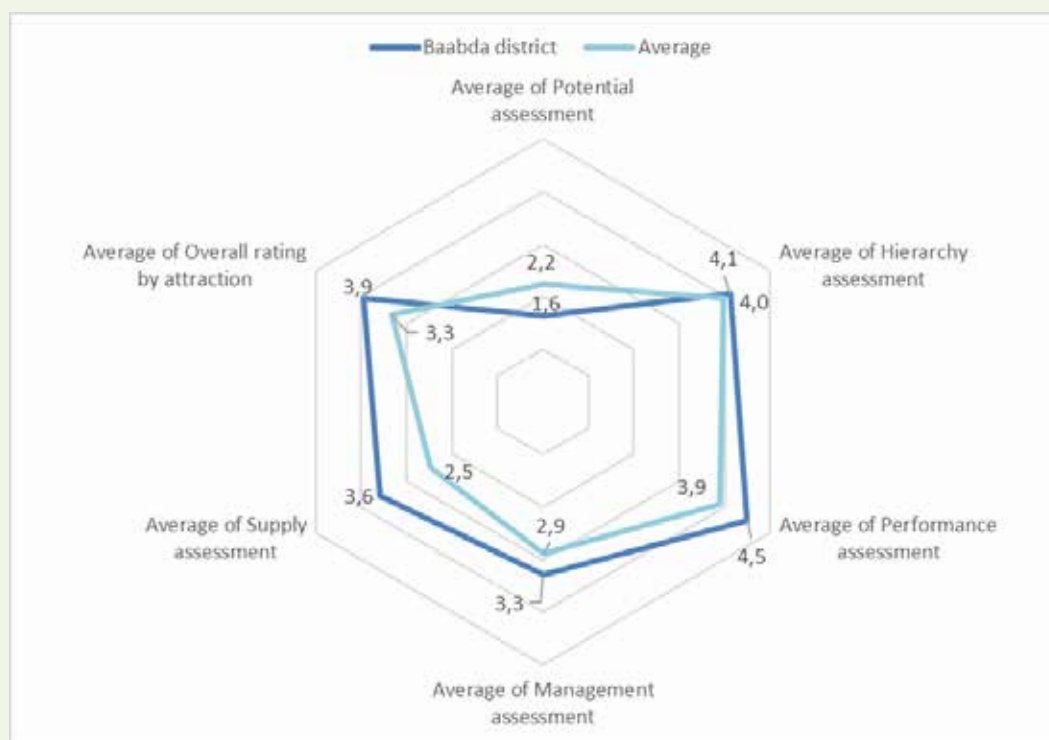
Being a complex and populated district, tourism is not concentrated in any specific area. Villages in the upper mountain concentrate a third of tourism activities, attractiveness, and supply, such as Baskinta, Al Mtein, and Al Khinchara villages.

Top 5 Villages	Concentration (% total)
Baskinta	16.26%
Al Mtein	9.99%
Al Khinchara	9.58%
Bhersaf	6.12%
Broummana	5.78%
Total	47.74%

5.5.14 Baabda

Baabda District	
DESCRIPTION	LOCATION
<p>Baabda is a district of Mount Lebanon Governorate, to the south and east of Beirut. The capital of the district is the city of Baabda. Since 1969, Baabda has been the presidential center of the Lebanese republic, hosting the Lebanese presidential palace.</p>	
MAIN NATURAL SITES	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Baabda specialty preserved food and dishes. - Carob molasses production - Pine & Cedars Forests: Baabda area, Bzebdine, Falougha, Hammana, Qornayel, Ras El Matn - Falougha water springs - Hammana Waterfall - Cherries Festival - Kfarselwan mountain lakes 	
MAIN CULTURAL SITES	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - First Lebanese Flag site - Falougha traditional houses - St Charbel statue - French Poet La Martine house - Maronite Festival of Al Saydeh - Falougha Festival 	
INFRASTRUCTURE, SERVICES, AND MOBILITY	
<p>It is well connected to Beirut and the rest of the country and has the main road to reach Bekaa Valley.</p>	
NATURE AND MOUNTAIN TOURISM ACTIVITIES AND SERVICES	
<p>Nature activities are basically for leisure and soft adventure, except at Hammana Waterfall, which is also for experts. Cultural activities are linked to traditional houses because of the district's connection and proximity to Beirut, as well as the literary asset linked with the French poet La Martine.</p>	
ANALYSIS OF BAABDA PERFORMANCE AND COMPETITIVENESS AS A TOURISM DESTINATION	
<p>The figure below shows the performance and competitiveness of Baabda district as a tourism destination according to an evaluation from 1 (low) to 5 (high) of the different pillars described in section 5.2.</p> <p>The Baabda district is not among the most touristic ones for mountain tourism. Its assessment is at the average in general, with good performance and management as well as hierarchy. Nevertheless, it has low potential for more mountain activities. This destination leans more towards other logistic and institutional sectors connected with Beirut dynamics.</p>	

Baabda District




CONCENTRATION OF TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN BAABDA

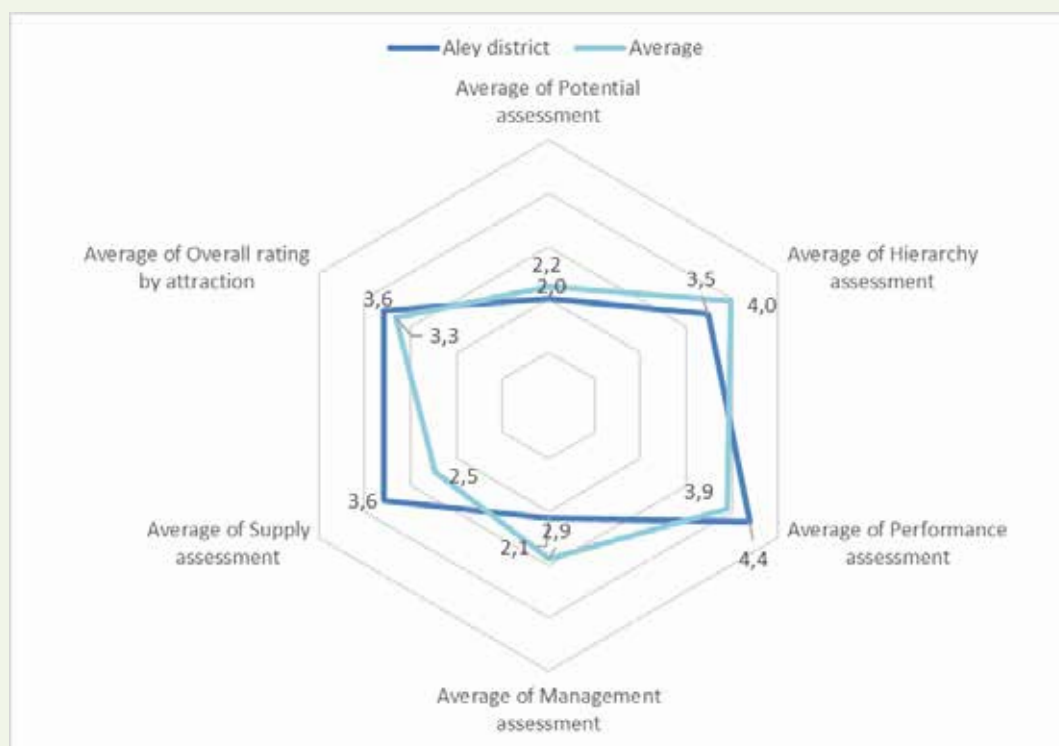
The top five villages concentrate most of tourism activities, attractiveness, and supply. Just Hammana and Falougha villages have half of the whole sector. This district acts as a Beirut extension for leisure.

Top 5 Villages	Concentration (% total)
Hammana	27.24%
Falougha	22.92%
Ras El Matn	11.36%
Salima	5.24%
Deir El Harf	5.17%
Total	71.93%

5.5.15 Aley

Aley District	
DESCRIPTION	LOCATION
<p>Aley is a district in Mount Lebanon, to the south-east of Beirut. The capital is Aley. Aley city was previously known as the “bride of the summers” during the 1960s and 1970s, when Aley and neighbouring Bhamdoun were attractive tourist locations for Lebanese emigres and local Lebanese.</p> <p>Like the neighbouring Chouf district, the Aley district is also one of the most religiously diverse areas in Lebanon. The largest religious community is the Druze denomination, followed by the Maronite and Greek Orthodox Christian denominations. There are also small communities of Shia Muslims.</p>	
MAIN NATURAL SITES	
<p>Natural sites in Aley are mainly for leisure purposes, with soft-adventure activities and linked to traditional farming. Some well-known assets are: Al Rous Mountain, Ain Trez Old Oak Tree, Al Fezer Trail, Kfarmatta Old Olive Trees, Ramlieh Pine Forest, Rechmaya Valley and River, Roueisset El Naaman mixed Forest and Trail.</p>	
MAIN CULTURAL SITES	
<p>Cultural sites are linked to the traditional architecture of the district, religious monuments, traditional workshops, and the industrial production of silk.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Traditional Houses, Monasteries, & Churches: Christian missionaries’ schools, churches, and monasteries; Al Saydeh old church; Mar Gerges ancient church; Rechmaya old churches and monasteries. - Particular Buildings: Tanoukhi palaces and shrines, Al Saad Palace, Old Serail, Arsalan old serial, old train station, Lebanese Independence House, Jisr El Qadi old bridge, Saoufar old hotels and buildings. - Traditional Factories: Silk factory, sculpture workshop garden, Bsous Silk Museum, Kfarmatta silk factory. - Wineries: Iris, Le Telegraphe de Belle Vue, and Chateau Qana. 	
INFRASTRUCTURE, SERVICES, AND MOBILITY	
<p>The district is easily accessible from Beirut and other places in Lebanon. Plenty of streets and roads connect the villages easily. Despite its urban proximity to the capital, the district still preserves its green landscape.</p>	
NATURE AND MOUNTAIN TOURISM ACTIVITIES AND SERVICES	
<p>Aley gained prominence when the railroad linking Beirut to Damascus was built between 1892 and 1895, passing through the district. The easy transportation attracted people from Beirut to spend summer months in Aley to enjoy the pleasant climate. Aley has become one of the most popular summer resorts of Mount Lebanon and the choice vacation spot for regional Arab countries.</p>	
ANALYSIS OF ALEY PERFORMANCE AND COMPETITIVENESS AS A TOURISM DESTINATION	
<p>The figure below shows the performance and competitiveness of Aley district as a tourism destination according to an evaluation from 1 (low) to 5 (high) of the different pillars described in section 5.2.</p> <p>This district tourism assessment is in the average of the whole country, with some nuances: tourism management is lower than average, and tourism supply is higher. Hierarchy and potential of assets is constrained. Thus, there is a need to create activities combining assets, providing experiences using what there is in the district, to fulfil supply offerings. There is still a way to improve in this regard, possibly by consolidating and reinforcing local activities under the management of a destination marketing organization (DMO). Currently, there is a local initiative to create a destination brand as ‘Authentic Aley’ under a DMO management structure.</p>	

Aley District



CONCENTRATION OF TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN ALEY

The tourism sector and dynamics are well distributed in this district. This can be a strength for the further development of tourism and leisure options by combining the diversity of offerings among all villages or by creating cooperative tourism products and experiences as a Union of Municipalities.

Top 5 Villages	Concentration (% total)
Abey	9.38%
Ain Trez	7.24%
Aley	7.19%
Bhamdoun	7.09%
Kfarmatta	6.64%
Total	37.55%

5.5.16 Interaction of nature-based tour operators with mountain destinations

Visitors to main nature reserves in Lebanon

Three out of the 14 nature reserves and one biosphere reserve have ecotourism management plans and count the number of their visitors. The total number of visitors to these four reserves increased by 147 per cent over eight years, from 72,000 in 2010 to 178,000 in 2018.

The Chouf Biosphere Reserve remains the main attraction among these four reserves, with 115,000 visitors (64 per cent) due to its large size, advanced management, availability of services and activities, and accessibility. Jabal Mousa received approximately 30,000 visitors in 2018; and Ehden and Tannourine each received around 15,000 visitors.

Nature-based tour operators' preferences in Lebanon – activities

In terms of activities offered in programmes of national nature-based tour operators (NBTOs), the results of the survey conducted in the study "Ecotourism and sustainability: Practices of the Lebanese nature-based operators" showed that:

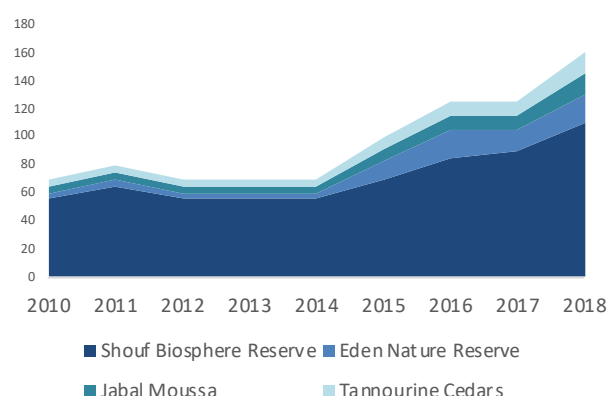
- Hiking is by far the most widely spread activity, with almost 90 per cent of tour operators offering it in their programmes.
- Soft adventure activities such as, biking, camping, caving, mountaineering, kayaking, and rafting are offered by almost 50 per cent of companies.
- On the other hand, special-interest activities such as birdwatching, stargazing, participation in community and cultural events, wildlife watching, culinary tourism, and wine tasting are offered by fewer than 10 per cent of all tour operators.

Nature-based tour operators' preferences in Lebanon – destinations

Regarding the destinations visited and preferred by tour operators, Figure 54 shows that there is a high concentration of demand in the top four nature reserves analysed previously. This high percentage is related to the possibility of visiting them during different seasons due to good infrastructure and management, as well as to the fact that they offer a wide range of activities.

On the other hand, NBTOs do not give the same importance to all nature reserves in Lebanon due to multiple factors, such as accessibility, activities, seasonality, management, services, and infrastructure. Consequently, the economic contribution to conservation and local development is not equal among NBTOs nor among reserves in Lebanon.

Figure 53. Evolution of the number visitors to main Lebanon's nature reserves (2010–2018)



Source: Abou Arrage & Abdel Hady, 2019

Figure 54. Percentage and frequency of tour operators' visits to mountain nature reserves

District	% of TO visiting the Nature Reserve	Number of Visits per Year			
		1 to 3 times	4 to 6 times	7 to 12 times	More than 12 times
Chouf Biosphere Reserve	78%	43%	38%	17%	2%
Jabal Mousa Biosphere Reserve	76%	61%	32%	6%	2%
Horsh Ehden Nature Reserve	72%	86%	10%	2%	2%
Tannourine Cedars Forest Reserve	72%	81%	11%	6%	2%
Yammouneh Nature Reserve	16%	75%	25%	0%	0%
Bentael Nature Reserve	6%	100%	0%	0%	0%
Jaj Cedars Reserve	4%	100%	0%	0%	0%

These findings demonstrate that most Lebanese NBTOs focus on only a few nature reserves and on limited activities related to ecotourism, which affects their level of specialization.

6 . MOUNTAIN TOURISM PRODUCT PORTFOLIO

6.1 Description of Tourism Products Analysed

All mountain attractions and resources have been grouped into various product categories. Figure 55 describes the product categories considered in the analysis:

Figure 55. Brief description of tourism products considered

Product	Description
Agritourism	Includes farm stays and or participation in agricultural practices (e.g., harvesting, practices learning, local products tasting, etc.)
Archaeological	Visiting major archaeological sites with many civilizations' layers and important archaeological excavations
Architecture	Visiting and learning about vernacular and distinguished/traditional architecture
Arts	Artists' exhibitions, workshops, museums
Crafts	Local and specialized handicraft making and selling
Culinary experiences	Specialty food processing, local dishes, seasonal products, cooking, and local spirits
Ecotourism	Visiting protected areas and participation in wildlife and natural resources conservation
Entertainment	Conventional restaurants, F&B, music/artistic festivals, and other special events
Ethno-tourism	Traditional lifestyle-related manifestations (living and non-living)
Geotourism	Important geological features, caving, grottos
History	Historical sites and events, sites with one civilization and minor excavations, monuments, rock inscriptions, historical routes, etc.
Literary	Sites, houses, museums, stories, etc. related to poets, writers, and philosophers
Soft adventure	Nature-based activities with little or no experience and with low risk
Hard adventure	Nature-based activities requiring skills and experience with risk and high adrenaline, as well as special equipment
Mixed adventure	Sites and attractions where both soft and hard adventure can be practiced
Recreation and leisure	Relaxation and activities in nature with no physical activities
Religious tourism	Associated with religions, faith, spiritual, saints, prophets, pilgrimage, and biblical related sites
Ski tourism	Ski slopes
Wine tourism	Visiting wineries, wine tasting, participation in harvesting

16.2 Methodology of analysis of current tourism products in mountains

Mountain tourism products in Lebanon have been assessed according to five variables, which describe the current and potential performance, relevance, and development of mountain tourism for each travel motivation. The variables used to conduct the analysis are the following:

- **Potential:** Indicates the potential of the product to be developed, according to its resources and its attractiveness.
- **Hierarchy:** Measures the current volume and historic growth of tourism demand per product, its growth potential, the attractiveness of the current and potential visitor profile, as well as the uniqueness of the tourism resources for each product.
- **Performance:** Analyzes the quality of current tourism infrastructure and services related to each product, the accessibility to and within tourism attractions, the distance from Beirut to each attraction and the safety and security for the visitor.
- **Management:** Measures the existence of a tourism development plan for the territory; the presence of a DMO or a tourism organization that manages tourism planning, marketing, and/or strategy; the availability of a legal and regulatory framework to preserve natural and cultural resources; and the current offer of mountain tourism routes, experiences, and itineraries.
- **Supply:** Availability, variety, and quality of tourism services and activities for each product.

16.3 Development and performance of mountain tourism products

The following figure shows the results of the analysis based on absolute values, which has been conducted for each of the tourism attractions of each product category. Each attraction has been assessed according to its performance per variable by assigning values from 0 (very poor) to 5 (very good) according to qualitative and quantitative criteria. Based on this methodology, Figure 56 provides some insights into the identification of top priority products in terms of concentration and relevance for mountain tourism in Lebanon. Dark green cells indicate the top performers per variable, light green cells indicate performers above the average, and yellow cells indicate products close to the average. Indexes in cells are the total sum of assessments per product, summing up all

assessments of all attractions of that product. Thus, products with a higher index means that they have more attractions as well as higher performance at each variable. This helps us to understand which products have a greater presence in the Lebanese Mountains.

Figure 56. Analysis of mountain tourism products' development and relevance in Lebanon – in total tourism assessment index

District	Potential	Hierarchy	Perform.	Manag.	Supply	Overall rating
Religious	1,404	652	891	534	856	733
Soft adventure	603	302	332	279	317	306
History	563	232	305	149	330	254
Wine tourism	187	85	104	86	91	92
Architecture	170	81	103	69	109	90
Archaeological	213	89	103	51	99	85
Ethno-tourism	176	75	98	56	99	82
Agritourism	109	67	59	35	56	54
Mixed adventure	111	69	48	24	54	49
Culinary	96	70	51	21	49	48
Ecotourism	73	46	41	34	38	40
Recreation and leisure	69	40	41	25	41	37
Geotourism	65	36	37	21	33	31
Entertainment	33	25	27	23	27	26
Literary	35	20	22	19	21	20
Hard adventure	39	25	16	10	18	17
Arts	34	15	22	11	19	17
Crafts	36	21	16	10	16	16
Ski tourism	20	12	13	12	13	13
Average	96	68	48	25	49	48

As noted, religious tourism, soft adventure, and historical tourism are the products with the highest number of attractions and resources in Lebanon, and therefore they are the three most popular, attractive, and developed travel motivations in the country. Additionally, the analysis highlights that there are other tourism products that could have a role as complementary products in the strategy, such as wine tourism, architectural and archaeological tourism, ethno-tourism, and gastronomy tourism.

16.4 Competitiveness of mountain tourism products in Lebanon

Despite the number of attractions per tourism product, this analysis shows the performance of all products in Lebanon at each variable. For this analysis, average performance of all attractions of each tourism product has been considered (scale from 1 to 5). Then, the results change.

As noted in the figures below, some products such as Ski, Hard Adventure, Culinary Tourism, and Wine Tourism, have the highest performance in most of

the variables, while in the previous figure they were not considered a priority due to their lower absolute 'value' because of the lower number of attractions related to each product. This difference indicates that those products mentioned before are special interest products that are well managed, that show a good performance due to the availability of tourism infrastructure and demonstrate a high potential to be further developed in Lebanon. These special interest products are not intended to attract a large volume of visitors, but they can become a key asset to diversify the demand, reduce geographical concentration and seasonality, and offer new development opportunities in remote rural and natural areas.

On the other hand, products such as religious tourism or soft adventure (that previously were mentioned as top priority) show a relatively poor performance in most of the variables. This indicates the need to conduct a product action plan to improve the value proposition and the competitiveness of the attractions and sites in Lebanon, to enhance and enrich the experience of the visitor.

Figure 57. Analysis of mountain tourism products' competitiveness per variable

District	Potential	Hierarchy	Perform.	Manag.	Supply	Overall rating
Religious	3,5	1,6	2,2	1,3	2,1	1,8
Soft adventure	4	2	2,2	1,9	2,1	2
History	3,6	1,5	1,9	1	2,1	1,6
Wine tourism	4,9	2,2	2,8	2,3	2,4	2,4
Architecture	3,8	1,8	2,3	1,5	2,4	2
Archaeological	3,6	1,5	1,7	0,9	1,7	1,5
Ethno-tourism	3,5	1,5	2	1,1	2	1,6
Agritourism	4,2	2,6	2,3	1,4	2,2	2,1
Mixed adventure	4,4	2,8	1,9	1	2,2	2
Culinary	4	2,9	2,2	0,9	2,1	2
Ecotourism	4,3	2,8	2,4	2	2,2	2,4
Recreation and leisure	3,8	2,3	2,3	1,4	2,3	2,1
Geotourism	3,8	2,1	2,2	1,2	1,9	1,9
Entertainment	3,7	2,9	3	2,6	3,1	2,9
Literary	4,4	2,6	2,8	2,5	2,6	2,6
Hard adventure	4,9	3,2	2,1	1,3	2,3	2,2
Arts	3,8	1,7	2,5	1,3	2,1	1,9
Crafts	4	2,3	1,8	1,2	1,9	1,8
Ski tourism	5	3,2	3,4	3,2	3,4	3,3

Figure 58. Top 5 and 10 tourism products at mountains of Lebanon according to their performance assessment at each variable

Overall rating – average index assessment		By hierarchy – average index assessment	
Type of Tourism	Overall rating	Type of Tourism	Hierarchy
Ski tourism	3,30	Ski tourism	3,20
Entertainment	2,90	Hard adventure	3,16
Literary	2,61	Culinary	2,93
Wine tourism	2,42	Entertainment	2,86
Ecotourism	2,36	Mixed adventure	2,78
Hard adventure	2,20	Ecotourism	2,75
Agritourism	2,10	Agritourism	2,61
Recreation and leisure	2,07	Literary	2,56
Soft adventure	2,06	Crafts	2,33
Architecture	2,02	Recreation and leisure	2,26
Culinary	2,01	Wine tourism	2,24
Mixed adventure	1,97	Geotourism	2,14
Arts	1,89	Soft adventure	2,05
Geotourism	1,88	Architecture	1,81
Religious	1,81	Arts	1,69
Crafts	1,80	Religious	1,61
Ethno tourism	1,65	Archaeological	1,52
History	1,62	Ethno-tourism	1,50
Archaeological	1,46	History	1,48

By potential – average index assessment	
Type of Tourism	Potential
Ski tourism	5,00
Wine tourism	4,92
Hard adventure	4,88
Mixed adventure	4,44
Literary	4,38
Ecotourism	4,29
Agritourism	4,19
Soft adventure	4,02
Culinary	4,00
Crafts	4,00
Recreation and leisure	3,83
Geotourism	3,82
Architecture	3,78
Arts	3,78
Entertainment	3,67
Archaeological	3,61
History	3,59
Ethno-tourism	3,52
Religious	3,47

By supply – average index assessment	
Type of Tourism	Potential
Ski tourism	3,38
Entertainment	3,08
Literary	2,64
Architecture	2,42
Wine tourism	2,42
Recreation and leisure	2,30
Hard adventure	2,26
Ecotourism	2,24
Mixed adventure	2,18
Agritourism	2,16
Soft adventure	2,13
Religious	2,11
Arts	2,11
History	2,10
Culinary	2,05
Ethno-tourism	1,99
Geotourism	1,94
Crafts	1,87
Archaeological	1,69

By performance – average index assessment	
Type of Tourism	Potential
Ski tourism	3,44
Entertainment	3,03
Literary	2,79
Wine tourism	2,75
Arts	2,46
Ecotourism	2,44
Recreation and leisure	2,31
Architecture	2,30
Agritourism	2,27
Soft adventure	2,22
Religious	2,20
Geotourism	2,19
Culinary	2,15
Hard adventure	2,07
Ethno-tourism	1,98
History	1,94
Mixed adventure	1,92
Crafts	1,82
Archaeological	1,74

By management – average index assessment	
Type of Tourism	Potential
Ski tourism	3,18
Entertainment	2,64
Literary	2,45
Wine tourism	2,28
Ecotourism	2,03
Soft adventure	1,86
Architecture	1,55
Recreation and leisure	1,39
Agritourism	1,37
Hard adventure	1,33
Religious	1,32
Arts	1,30
Geotourism	1,24
Crafts	1,18
Ethno-tourism	1,12
Mixed adventure	0,99
History	0,95
Culinary	0,90
Archaeological	0,87

Highlights from the average results of assessments by variable:

- Skiing is the best performing tourism sector in the Lebanon Mountains (at all variables), despite having the lowest number of attractions. The facilities are not well distributed along the mountains, but their performance in general is very good.
- Entertainment is the second highest tourism product, although this ranking is because it has the second-best current numbers in terms of supply, performance, and management. On the other hand, its hierarchy is not so high, and its potential is very low in general. This shows a consolidated sector maturity of this product. The good practices and expertise of entertainment activities should be exported to other tourism products to make them more attractive, but with a lower intensity approach to their development in the mountains and protected areas.
- Literary tourism or tourism based on writers, novels, and other cultural written assets is well positioned in general. Even though its hierarchy is not among the top five, it is a top 10 and it is well promoted and developed in terms of supply. This strength should be blended with other culture-based tourism products to consolidate them as an even stronger driver for visitors.
- Wine tourism is like literary tourism, in that it currently performs well and has the potential to expand even further. Wine tourism goes along with other tourism products such as culinary and culture, as they share the same target market. And the Lebanon Mountains have a wide variety and hierarchy of good assets that can be consolidate as a primary driver for national and international markets.
- Ecotourism, agritourism, and hard adventure tourism are in a middle range according to the overall assessment. The three have high potential and hierarchy, but disparity in terms of current supply, performance, and management. Of the three, ecotourism has a better assessment thanks to good management in Chouf, Jabal Moussa, Ehden, Jezzine, and other consolidated areas. Regarding hunting as a tourism activity, it can be considered within the hard adventure category. In this case, even though it is widely practiced among Lebanese, there is no proper legal management of the activity, and thus it can affect the environment and other tourism experiences.
- Others. Even though religious tourism assets are the most numerous in the Lebanon Mountains, their overall performance and the variables ones are relatively low. This suggests that religious tourism could be a strong leverage product to generate streams of visitors to new tourism offerings (agro, eco, etc.). Finally, archaeological and history tourism are at the bottom of the whole tourism product list according to the assessment.

16.5 Description of current main mountain tourism products in Lebanon

6.5.1 trekking and hiking – focus on Lebanon mountain trail (Lmt)

The LMT is the first long-distance hiking trail in Lebanon and the Arab region and covers a path of 470 km. It passes by 76 towns and villages from Andqet in the district of Akkar in the north of Lebanon to Marjaayoun in the south, at altitudes ranging from 570 to 2,073 meters. The trail crosses one World Heritage Site, one Biosphere Reserve, two nature reserves, and four protected areas. Approximately 20 per cent of the LMT is protected.

The LMT was developed to showcase the natural beauty and cultural wealth of Lebanon's mountains and rural areas, as well as to provide a tool and an incentive for local communities to conserve this unique heritage, since it brings them closer together as well as provides economic opportunities in rural areas through environmentally and socially responsible tourism.

Figure 59. Lebanon mountain trail



Source: www.lebanontrail.org

Lebanon mountain trail association

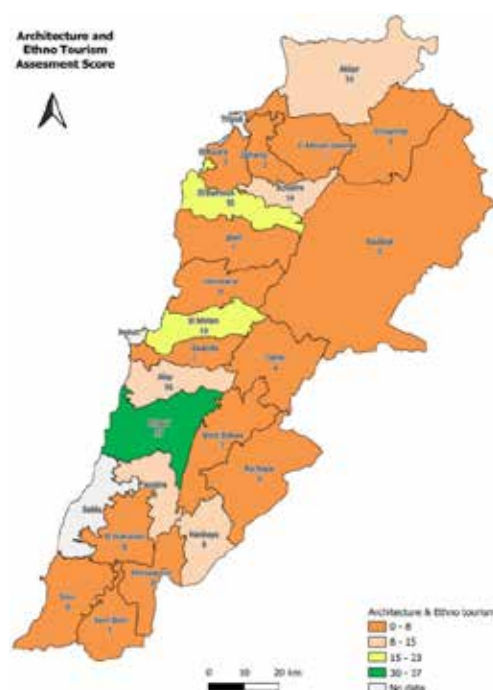
The Lebanon Mountain Trail Association (LMTA) was established in 2007 with the objective to develop, maintain, and protect the LMT; to help establish side trails on the LMT; to protect the natural, cultural, and architectural heritage and landmarks near the trail; and to enhance economic opportunities by promoting responsible tourism.

In line with this, the LMTA has been upgrading the existing guesthouses along the trail and helping to develop new ones. In this way, the LMT has expanded rural tourism in Lebanon and opened many new opportunities for longer stays in mountain destinations.

The association has three main programmes: trail development, education, and community development. Currently, the LMTA is working with municipalities, Unions of Municipalities, local NGOs, universities, and researchers as well as international organizations to promote sustainable land management practices along the LMT for the trail to become a conservation corridor for generations to come. Among its conservation efforts, the LMTA launched the process of signing memorandums of understanding and developing integrated action plans with trailside municipalities. One of the main challenges of the LMTA is to deal with uncertainty and safety conflicts at the northern and southern borders of Lebanon, where the trail starts and/or ends.

Also, as seen in the map, the ethnographical conditions to involve local communities in tourism are not the best in general. Besides the traditional districts that are accustomed to tourism activities (Chouf, Matn, Batroun, Aley, Jezzine, and Bcharreh), the rest of the high mountain areas lack the proper conditions to work on the authentic community-based experiences that the LMT faces.

Figure 60. Districts with better conditions for community-based tourism activities



6.5.2 Skiing

Main ski destinations in Lebanon

Lebanon has five operating ski resorts located in the governorates of North Lebanon and Mount Lebanon, at an average elevation range from 1,700 to 2,400 meters. Four of the five are located close to Beirut, at an average distance of 50 km, and are accessible by car from main populated areas within a two-hour drive on average. The Lebanese Mountains offer perfect conditions for skiing, as they provide on average 100 skiing days a year and favourable weather conditions. The most popular ski resort is Mzaar Kfardebian, which received more than 153,000 visitors in 2017. This resort was established in 1963 and is the one with the highest number of lifts (20) and the longest slope (20 km). Additionally, Mzaar Kfardebian is also the most expensive resort since its tickets cost \$67 per day, compared with the average of \$40 per day charged by other ski resorts in Lebanon.

Figure 61. Lebanon ski resorts – location



(1) Cedars Ski Resort / (2) Laklout Village / (3) Mzaar Kfardebian / (4) Faqr Club / (5) Zaarour Club
Source: Ghadban, et al . 2019

Figure 62. Ski resorts in Lebanon – features

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
	Cedar's Ski Resort	Laklout Village	Mzaar Kfardebian	F a a r a Club	Zaarour Club
Location	North Lebanon	Mount Lebanon	Mount Lebanon	Mount Lebanon	Mount Lebanon
Establishment	1953	1958	1963	1973	1982
(Elevation range (m	1,950–2,850	1,650–1,920	1,830–2,465	1,735–1,980	1,700–2,005
Distance from Beirut	116 km	65 km	50 km	46 km	38 km
Slope length	9 km	8 km	20 km	3 km	16 km
N° ski lifts	5	6	20	7	6
Skiing days/year	122	72	106	71	90
Tickets sold	2,301	15,881	153,161	2,949	27,777
Ticket price	\$40	\$27	\$67	\$40	\$47

Source: Ghadban, et al . 2019

Types of skiing

Mountains in Lebanon offer a wide variety of ski and snow activities during the winter season. Figure 63 summarizes the most popular of these and describes the main destinations in which each activity is practiced and/or has potential to be developed.

Figure 63. Types of ski activities practiced in Lebanon

Category	Description	Destinations
Alpine skiing	Long considered the only winter activity practiced in Lebanon. The season runs from mid-December to mid-March. An entire economy was built in Lebanon around alpine skiing, including mountain resorts, hotels, restaurants, outdoor shops, snowmobile renting, bars, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cedars Ski Resort - Lakloulou Village - Mzaar Kfardebian - Faqra Club - Zaarour Club
Nordic skiing	Consisting of using skis with skins to climb mountains and enjoy the descent after the effort of climbing. Can be practiced in natural reserves as well as in ski resorts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lebanon's ski resorts - Akkar, Donnieh, Bcharreh, Ehden, Tanourine, Aqoura, Laqlouq, Kfardebian, Faraya, Baskinta, Chouf area, Rachaya.
Snow-shoeing	Snowshoeing came to Lebanon in the late 1990s as an alternative way to hike and enjoy the beautiful winter landscape with no previous technical equipment and low cost. Nowadays it is one of the most popular winter activities in the country.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The mountains of Akkar, Donnieh, Bcharreh, Ehden, Tanourine, Aqoura, Laqlouq, Kfardebian, Faraya, Baskinta, Chouf area, Rachaya are picturesque destination for snowshoeing lovers.

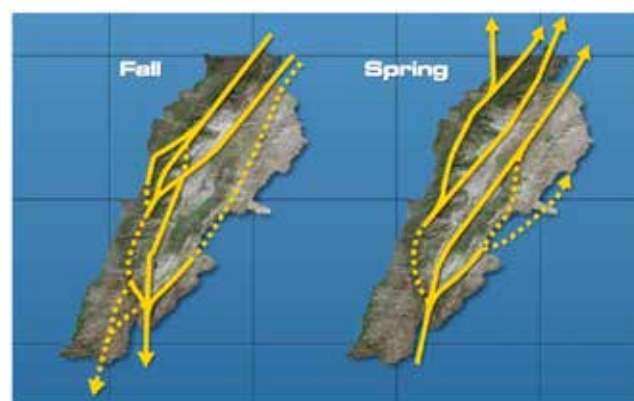
6.5.3 Birdwatching

Potential to Become a Relevant Birdwatching Destination due to its Location

Lebanon has a huge potential to become a birdwatching destination since its geographic location places it at a strategic stopping point for birds along the African-Eurasian migration paths. Birds migrate from Europe and Asia to Africa in autumn and fly back to their breeding places in the spring season. Birds depend on resting spots in Lebanon during their migration to secure food, water, and habitat. Thus, Lebanon is considered an important flyway and hotspot for thousands of birds migrating between continents, which creates an incredible opportunity for birdwatchers and nature lovers to observe and photograph a large diversity and quantity of migratory and resident birds.

Lebanon hosts at least 400 species of birds, including globally threatened soaring bird species in such as the Dalmatian Pelican, Greater Spotted Eagle, White-tailed Eagle, Egyptian Vulture, Pallid Harrier, Imperial Eagle, and the Lesser Kestrel. The presence of these birds in Lebanon demonstrates the importance of this country on an international scale for their preservation.

Figure 64. Bird Migration in Lebanon



Source: www.spnl.org

Protected areas for birdwatching in Lebanon

Lebanon is home to a total of 15 Important Bird Areas (IBA) and Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs): Ehden Forest Nature Reserve, Palm Islands Nature Reserve, Aammik Wetland, Chouf Cedar Nature Reserve, Hima Aanjar / Kfar Zabad, Lake Qaraaoun, Riim / Sannine Mountain, Tannourine Cedars Nature Reserve, Hima Ebel es-Saqi, Semi Deserts of Ras Baalbeck, Beirut River Valley, Upper Mountains of Akkar-Donnieh, Jabal Moussa Mountain, Bental Forest Nature Reserve, and Ramlieh Valley.

Eleven of these 15 IBAs/KBAs are in mountain destinations. Moreover, of the 15 sites, five are government declared nature reserves, two are preserved by the Society for the Protection of Nature in Lebanon in collaboration with local communities through the Hima approach, 4 have active conservation NGOs, and 4 have no current protection.

6.5.4 Nature-Based Soft Adventure Tourism

Definition of the concept

The natural and geographical environment of mountain areas in Lebanon offers a great variety of opportunities for nature and adventure tourism lovers. Main soft adventure activities in Lebanon and the destinations where they can be developed are defined below.

Activity	Description	Main mountain destinations
Cycling and Mountain Biking	<p>Lebanon's rugged mountains, hills, and valleys offer ideal scenery to discover the country's nature, heritage, and culture by bicycle, following multiple existent routes that cross the country from north to south and from east to west.</p> <p>Many small villages have small shops offering bike rentals for independent on-road biking.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The high plateaus of the Mount Lebanon Range are covered with extensive trail networks, offering technically challenging terrain for seasoned cyclists. - Cyclists can ride up to Qornet Es-Saouda (Lebanon's highest peak) with views of the Bekaa Valley to the east, Syria to the north, and the Mediterranean Sea to the west. - For tourists looking for smoother cycling tracks, Bekaa Valley offers many choices both on-road and off-road. - Mountain biking trails in Tannourine, Dhour El Choueir, Baskinta and Wadi El Salib areas.
Caving	<p>Lebanon offers exciting opportunities for caving with over 400 caves, caverns, and sinkholes throughout the country. Caving and canyoning experiences in Lebanon are for everyone, from the expert spelunker to the casual tourist. Lebanon is also home to some of the deepest vertical caves in Middle East-called sinkholes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mount Lebanon region benefits from the highest number of caves, which are spread all over the inner part of the country. - The most popular and tourist-friendly caves are Jeita Grotto, with its huge caverns and underground lakes. - For the more adventurous tourists, Lebanon offers caving experiences that require the presence of specialized guides and certain equipment.
Rafting and Kayaking	<p>Rafting and kayaking are emerging soft adventure activities in Lebanon, offered by approximately 20 specialized tour operators. Spring is the best season, as the snow from the mountain melts, creating great deep and fast water conditions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rafting and kayaking activities are concentrated on the rivers of "Nahr" el Assi in northern Bekaa, "Nahr" Litani, in the south, and "Nahr" Ibrahim in Jbail.
Rock Climbing	<p>Lebanon is one of the few places in the Middle East to offer a broad range of rock-climbing activities, from relatively easy summit climbs and technical peak ascents to bouldering and adventure climbing.</p> <p>Lebanon hosts the biggest rock-climbing outdoor site in the Middle East, and it offers great climbing opportunities located near interesting cultural and historical attractions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "Beit" Mery is one of the closest sectors to Beirut at an altitude of 750 meters with a family-friendly sector. - "Beit" Chlela sector is one of the newest climbing sectors in Lebanon. - The Aqoura, Tannourine, and Laqlouq regions have rock faces rated from 3 to 8 (on the French rating system), many of which are already bolted.

Lebanon has potential in other emerging soft adventure activities in the country, such as paragliding, canyoning, rope courses, and zip lines. However, current infrastructure is not sufficiently developed for these activities, and they are not likely to become the core of the value proposition to attract tourists.

Despite the great potential for the development of adventure and nature tourism, there are several challenges and threats that must be addressed in the Mountain Destination Sustainable Tourism Strategy of Lebanon. Main threats and challenges are:

Soft Mixed Adventure Tourism Assessment Score

Legend:

- 0 - 9
- 9 - 17
- 17 - 24
- 24 - 32
- 32 - 40
- no data

Scale: 0 10 20 km

Global warming affecting the four seasons and changing climate events, such as thaw periods and rainy seasons, which will impact the attractiveness of some activities such as kayaking or rafting. More extreme weather conditions, especially during summer and winter, will also affect the practice of mountain activities such as skiing, climbing, and trekking.

The risks of conflicts and insecurity in the region will prevent tourists from visiting some mountain areas, especially in the north and east of the country.

The lack of promotion on the international level has resulted in Lebanon's potential in soft adventure and nature tourism to remain largely unknown to tourists from international source markets.

6.5.5 Culture, heritage, and religious tourism

A multicultural destination shaped by many civilizations

Despite its relatively small size, Lebanon is extremely rich in culture. Lebanon's history has been shaped by its strategic location at the crossroads between the East and the West, and as the gateway to the Middle East. The country has witnessed the rise and fall of many civilizations that have all added something to Lebanon's rich cultural heritage. The land was successively conquered by the ancient Egyptians, Persians, Greeks, Romans, Byzantines, Arabs, Crusaders, Mamelukes, and Ottomans.

The following table describes the main cultural and architectural heritage of each of the civilizations that have inhabited the country, and which visitors can enjoy in the mountainous areas of Lebanon.

Civilization and period	Description and influence	Heritage and attractions in mountain destinations
Phoenicians (3,500–334 B.C.)	Lebanon first appeared in recorded history around 3,000 B.C., with the settlement of the area by the Phoenicians. The Phoenicians established great maritime, trade, and religious city-states in several of Lebanon's coastal cities, and connected them with inland and mountain cities. Consequently, Phoenician heritage was spread across the country.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Baalbeck, the "city of the sun," is considered the main archaeological site in Lebanon and was founded by the Phoenicians. The Phoenicians built the first temple here, dedicated to Baal, the sun god, from which the city got its name. Today, Baalbeck's Phoenician origins have been covered and eclipsed by the great Roman temples later built on the site. - Phoenicians also ventured high into the Lebanon Mountains to establish communities and exploit cedar forests. Many ruins of ancient temples and inhabited caves can be found in Adonis and Qadisha Valleys.
Greeks (333–64 B.C.)	There are no significant ruins from the Hellenistic period in Mount Lebanon.	
Romans (64–399 A.D.)	<p>Lebanon is home to some of the best-preserved and most impressive Roman sites in the world.</p> <p>Christianity also spread to Lebanon during this era and flourished as the Roman emperors officially adopted the religion in the 4th Century.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Baalbeck's impressive complex of temples and city ruins includes the Temple of Bacchus (the best-preserved roman temple in the Middle East) and the columns of the Temple of Jupiter (the largest Roman temple ever constructed). Under the Romans, Baalbeck, or the "City of the Sun," was a major religious center that served as a testament to the power and wealth of the Roman Empire. - Temples of Faqra is an archaeological site in Kfardebian, with Roman and Byzantine ruins. Located near the Faqra ski resort on the slopes of Mount Sannine at an altitude of 1,500 meters. It is one of the most important UNESCO Heritage Sites – tentative listed Nahr al-Kalb Valley.² The ruins are the most extensive Roman archaeological site in Mount Lebanon, consisting of columns, altars tombs, and temples.

2- Nahr el Kalb is at the UNESCO tentative list for Lebanon. http://whc.unesco.org/fr/listesindicatives/?action=listtentative&pattern=Nahr+el+Kalb&state=&theme=&criteria_restriction=&date_start=&date_end=&order=

Civilization and period	Description and influence	Heritage and mountain destinations attractions in
Byzantines (399–636 A.D.)	<p>As the Western Roman Empire declined, the Byzantine Empire grew and commercial and intellectual growth in Lebanon continued.</p> <p>However, around the 5th and 6th Centuries A.D., ecumenical debates and corruption in the church led to increasing unrest. From this religious dissension, the Maronite Church was established and took refuge in the mountainous areas in Lebanon.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Qadisha Valley has had monastic communities continuously since the earliest years of Christianity and has remained a place of spiritual refuge and pilgrimage to this day. Most of the monasteries and churches were built during this period. It was also at times a destination for Muslim mystics, or Sufis, who also visited it for meditation and solitude. In 1998, UNESCO added the valley to the list of World Heritage Sites because of its importance as the site of some of the earliest Christian monastic settlements in the world - In Baalbeck, Byzantine Emperor Theodosius tore down the altars of the Temple of Jupiter and built a basilica using the temple's stones and architectural elements. The remnants of this basilica can still be seen near the stairway of the Temple. - Other temples and heritage structures built during the Byzantine period and still preserved in Lebanon are St. Anthony the Great Monastery (Zgharta), Justina Monastery (Batroun), and Our Lady of the Hill (Chouf).
Arabs (660–1258 A.D.)	<p>Under Arab rule, the region of Lebanon became a refuge for many ethnic and religious groups. Splinter Christian groups, including the Maronites and the Melchites, settled in the Qadisha Valley and Zahlé. Islamic followers of an Egyptian caliph settled in southern Lebanon and established the Druze sect, still a major religious group in the Chouf and other areas of modern-day Lebanon.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Currently there are few archaeological remnants of this period in Mount Lebanon. - The impressive city of Aanjar is the only known remain of the 8th century Umayyad Dynasty in Lebanon. Thought to be the summer home of Caliph Walid I, Aanjar was a major commercial center for the region and contains the remains of over 600 small shops, colonnaded boulevards, baths, and temples.
Crusaders (1099–1291 A.D.)	<p>Between 1109 and 1124, Lebanon's key cities (Tripoli, Beirut, Saida, Tyre) were all conquered by the Crusaders. Soon after, the Muslim reconquest began, led by Saladin, with the region returning to Muslim control by 1291. One lasting influence of the Crusades in Lebanon was the creation of renewed linkages between the Maronites and the Roman Catholics.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There are numerous archaeological remnants (towers, castles, and churches) of the Crusades scattered along the Lebanese mountains and throughout the countryside. Notable sites include Our Lady of the Watchman (Koura), St. Simeon Church (Jbeil), Our Lady of Kaftoun (Koura), and Deir Al Salib Monastery (Bcharreh).
Mamelukes (1250–1516 A.D.)	<p>Crusaders are driven away by the Mamelukes, who formed a Sultanate. During this period many Shia Muslims migrated to Lebanon and settled in southern regions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The main cultural heritage preserved from this period in Mount Lebanon is the Emir Fakhereddine Mosque (Chouf), which was built in 1493 by Fakhr al-Din I and restored in the 16th Century. It is the oldest mosque in Mount Lebanon.
Ottomans (1516–1914 A.D.)	<p>Ottomans reigned over the country but left its management to the local emirs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - During these years, multiculturalism is already established in Lebanon, and multiple 'modern' cultural and religious temples and sites are developed, including mosques, churches, cathedrals, and convents.

Source: Visit-Lebanon.org (Cultural and religious tourism); and Culturalreligious tourism.com.

Religious Heritage and Tourism

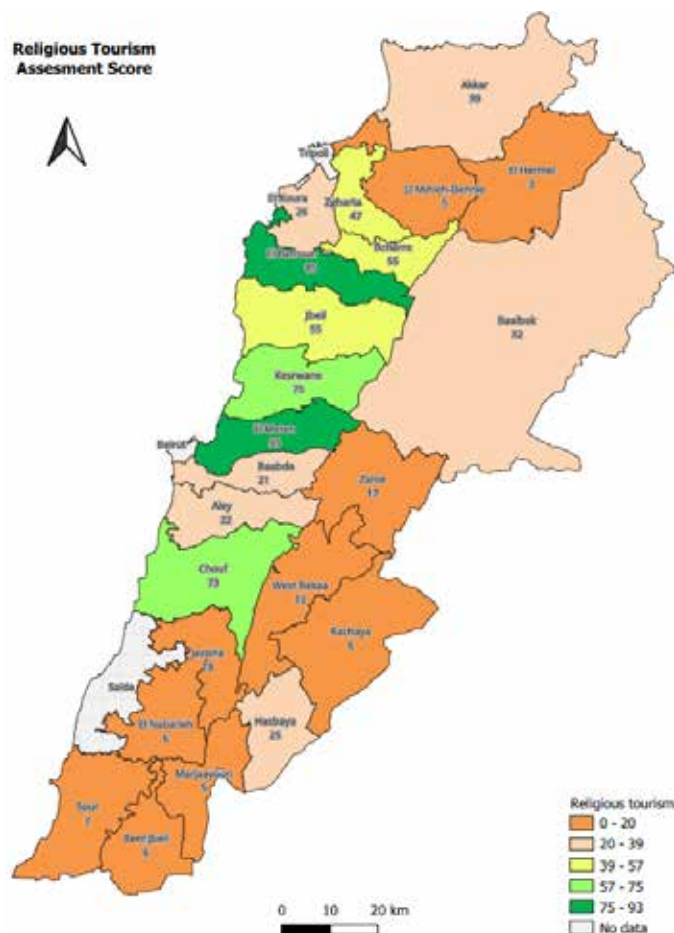
As noted above, Lebanon is an ancient land that has been at the heart of the growth of two of the world's major religions, Christianity, and Islam. For centuries, diverse religious traditions have shared this land, creating a rich mosaic of religious beliefs and a unique multicultural society. Moreover, many times throughout its history, the mountain areas in Lebanon have served as a place of refuge and spiritual retreat.

This blend of beliefs is constantly experienced by visitors all over the country, without clear borders. And there are common spiritual meeting points, such as sanctuaries for the Holy Virgin.

Religious pilgrims can discover this sense of sanctuary in the beauty of the country's holy places and natural mountain terrains.

The table below describes the most important features regarding religious heritage for Christian and Muslim pilgrimage:

Figure 67. Religious Tourism Situation by District



Religion	Religious heritage and relevant facts
Christianity	<p>The roots of first Christian communities in Lebanon date to apostolic times. Scriptures say that Jesus undertook more than one preaching and performed many miracles between Tyre and Sidon, among which the first was transforming water into wine in Cana.</p> <p>Christianity spread over centuries, and consequently places of Christian worship exist throughout the country and mountain territories. Pilgrims can find churches, convents, and temples carved into the stones of the most impressive valleys or perched on the heights of mountains with the most breath-taking views</p> <p>Christianity has had a strong presence in the mountains of North Lebanon for more than 2,000 years.</p> <p>Mountain areas in Lebanon have served as shelters for Christians and monks since the 3rd Century. Chapels, hermitages, and monasteries were erected where monks of all faiths – and even Sufi Muslims – withdrew to lead a life of seclusion, contemplation, and meditation.</p>
Islam	<p>Muslims considered Mount Lebanon as a place for isolation where they could withdraw from the world to devote themselves to prayer while remaining ready to respond the call of Jihad. Mount Lebanon offered everything they needed given the abundant forests, caves, valleys, food, and water sources.</p> <p>Islam in Lebanon was extended to the highest mountains in Akkar, Donnieh, Koura, Hadath al-Joubba, Al-Mounaytarah, Chouf, and Djebel 'Amil. In these areas, pilgrims can find numerous mosques and spiritual places from the Sunni, Shiite, and Druze Muslim traditions that date from Umayyad times (661–750 A.D.) and continue successively to the Fatimid, Ayyubid, Cross, Mameluke, and Ottoman era.</p> <p>It is believed that the Mosque in Mecca was built of stones from four mountains, among which is the Mount Lebanon, and that the foundations of the mosque are based on five stones, one of which is cut from the Lebanese Mountains.</p> <p>Islam and Christianity have coexisted in the Lebanese Mountains for centuries. Therefore, Lebanon has been a place of inter-religious exchange.</p>

Source: Visit-Lebanon.org (cultural and religious tourism) & culturalreligious tourism.com

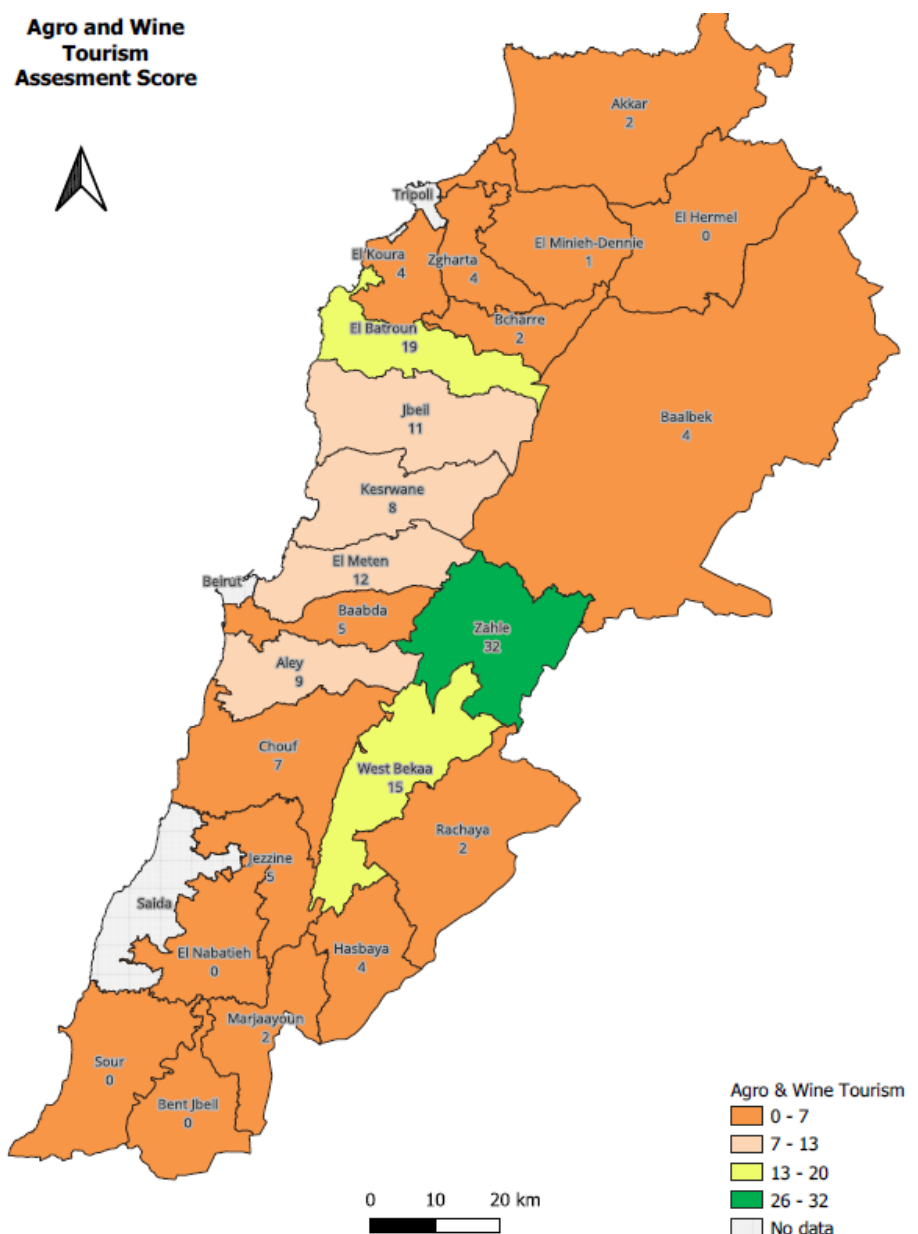
6.5.6 Agritourism and wine tourism

Finally, agritourism and wine tourism have a clear geographic focus: Zahle and Western Bekaa, as well as Batroun.

Even though there are many agricultural areas across the country, these districts present the best conditions in terms of potential and current agritourism and wine tourism development.

Despite this positive situation, there is still a lot of work that needs to be done to make these types of tourism activities attractive and competitive for visitors, either because of lack of product preparedness or because of lack of awareness among local entrepreneurs. The area of Zahle and western Bekaa has the greatest concentration of wineries of Lebanon (around 40), some with very attractive landscapes and history (e.g., Chateau Ksara).

Figure 68. Agritourism and wine tourism best districts



7 . THE TRAVELLER'S 'CUSTOMER JOURNEY' COMPETITIVENESS

17.1 Definition of the traveler's customer journey

As modern travellers increasingly tend to define a destination based on the experiences they discover throughout the journey, destination 'touch points' are becoming highly important. A destination touch point is any point of contact that might define the visitor's travel experience and the overall perception of the destination.

These touch points exist throughout the consumer journey, from booking the trip to getting back home. The touch points analysed here include (but are not limited to) local hospitality, travel agents, taxi drivers, staff at local businesses, tour operators

and guides, brochures, websites, guidebooks, and other services offered at visitor information centers.

The evaluation of Lebanon's Customer Journey has been made based on the findings of the current strategic analysis carried out by the consultant to have an overall vision of the competitiveness of the tourist experience in Lebanon. This helps understand issues and key points of intervention within the strategy.

7.1.1 Booking the trip



Aspects with Higher Evaluation

- Availability of information in official tourism websites and social media accounts.
- Local initiatives to create online channels to show mountain and rural destinations and tourism assets in Lebanon and to inspire potential special-interest travellers

Aspects with Lower Evaluation

- ✗ Travel warnings from main international and regional source markets against visiting rural areas in Lebanon due to insecurity and geopolitical conflicts, which creates a perception of risk.
- ✗ Lack of high-quality inspirational content from main tourism attractions in mount Lebanon.
- ✗ Lack of a common promotion and distribution strategy among all mountain tourism stakeholders.
- ✗ Low level of digitalization of tourism operators and local companies in rural and mountain areas, which requires offline procedures to book the trip.

7.1.2 Transport to the destination



Aspects with Higher Evaluation	Aspects with Lower Evaluation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High connectivity with main Western and regional source markets, with daily direct flights operated by top airlines. • Planned expansion of the airport, with more connectivity and capacity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Travel cost to the destination for individual travellers. ✗ Overcapacity of current airport facilities. ✗ Limited connectivity off season.

7.1.3 Transport in the destination



Aspects with Higher Evaluation	Aspects with Lower Evaluation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High variety of destinations at short distance from main urban areas. • Availability of tourism information at main mountain tourism destinations (nature reserves, UNESCO sites, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Weak road maintenance and signage, especially at high-altitude roads and isolated villages. ✗ Lack of public transport in rural and mountain areas and/or low frequency and quality of the service. ✗ Need for private transport to reach some rural and mountain areas. ✗ Some mountain roads are closed during winter season.

7.1.4 Feelings affecting the overall experience



Aspects with Higher Evaluation	Aspects with Lower Evaluation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beautiful and varied landscape and nature. • Rich ancient and modern culture and heritage. • Local communities' hospitality and charm in rural and mountain villages. • Open and 'liberal' destination in the Middle East. • Overall feeling of being in a mystic site, a crossroad of religions and beliefs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Insecurity and lack of confidence before travelling due to negative travel warnings from governments and tour operators. ✗ Lack of knowledge about 'what to see' and 'what to find' in rural and mountain areas. ✗ Lack of resources and know-how to receive special interest tourists. ✗ Economic crisis resulted in lower quality service and professionalism among the workforce in rural tourism businesses, including restaurants, hotels, accommodations, and guides. ✗ Unprotected natural areas in some destinations. ✗ Uncertainty regarding the expected quality of a service due to the lack of industry quality standards and certifications.

7.1.5 Accommodation experience



Aspects with Higher Evaluation	Aspects with Lower Evaluation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hospitality of hosts and personnel. • Current developments of ecolodges and rural accommodations with high quality standards in rural areas with a rich natural environment. • Variety of accommodation types in mountain destinations. • Looking to combine the natural environment and the opportunity to develop experiential accommodations (glamping, homestays, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Uncertainty regarding the expected quality of a service due to the lack of industry quality standards and certifications. ✗ Potential perception of low hygiene conditions in rural and isolated mountain areas. ✗ Perception of high prices for medium-quality hotels (especially for domestic market). ✗ Lack of confidence in domestic tour operators and travel agencies regarding rural accommodations. ✗ Domestic market prefers low-budget accommodation (guesthouses, camping, etc.). ✗ Demand growth for campsites and non-regulated accommodation.

7.1.6 Food experience



Aspects with Higher Evaluation	Aspects with Lower Evaluation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diversity and quality of food and mixed gastronomic styles. • Ancient gastronomic traditions. • Combination of food and tourism experiences in rural areas. • Lebanon as the cradle of Mediterranean cuisine 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Uncertainty regarding the expected quality of a service due to the lack of industry quality standards and certifications. ✗ Potential perception of low hygiene conditions in rural and isolated mountain areas.

7.1.7 Shopping experience



Aspects with Higher Evaluation	Aspects with Lower Evaluation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lebanon is associated with luxury, fashion, and jewellery shopping, especially by Middle East tourists. Traditional handcrafts and typical products in local mountain villages. Souks in ancient cities are attractive for visitors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of basic services and products in some isolated mountain areas and villages.

7.1.8 Experiences and activities



Aspects with Higher Evaluation	Aspects with Lower Evaluation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Variety of experiences in each destination for different types of travellers. Possibility to discover and experience unspoiled and uncrowded destinations. Great variety of natural assets and landscapes for nature and soft adventure tourism. Activities adapted to different seasons. International development programmes to develop new experiences and support local communities (Lebanon Mountain Trail, etc.). Diversity of historical sites and museums. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dependence on daily-tours and low budget activities operated by non-regulated operators. Lack of diversification and special interest products. Unfair competition from nature-based tour operators is causing a cost cut and a consequent decrease in the quality of services provided. Lack of regulation of operators' non-sustainable practices that can affect the natural and social environment of Lebanon's mountain destinations.

8 . MAIN INSIGHTS FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN MOUNTAIN AREAS

As a result of the previous analysis from secondary data, as well as based on field visits and more than 30 interviews with key stakeholders, the primary issues affecting sustainable tourism in the Lebanese Mountains can be summarized as follows:

- a. Loss of international markets and dominance of the domestic market.
- b. National inhabitants have a seasonal residence dynamic. They stay by the sea during winter and in the mountains during summer. These dynamic stresses residential areas seasonally.
- c. The Lebanese discovered new destinations, sites, and nature areas in the mountains during the pandemic. They have also increased the length of their home stay in mountain areas from the beginning of summer 2020 through all of 2021 due to the huge shift to working from home.
- d. The combination of the previous items raises the risk of new residential movements towards higher mountain areas or new sites, with better natural conditions, landscapes, and solitude. There is the threat of spoiling this fragile environment as well as to change its appeal for tourism if not properly managed.
- e. The close vicinity of domestic market distribution cities such as Beirut, Byblos, Tripoli, and the whole central-western area of the country (Mount Lebanon and the northern governorates) to the whole country. Good accessibility by road to the western side of the mountain range all year-round. Bad accessibility by road to the eastern side of the mountain range and Bekaa Valley in winter (just few ways available when there is snow and storms).
- f. This vicinity and the social seasonal dynamic produce mostly daytrips in the western touristic destinations (unless they coincide with the residential area, where the length of stay is seasonal). On the eastern side and in the Bekaa Valley the length of stay is just one night, which is still quite short. The challenge is to increase the length of stays on both sides.
- g. This concentration of domestic market and residential stays on Mount Lebanon and in the northern governorates, despite the proximity of multiple other areas for tourism, does not translate into higher tourism visits to the Bekaa Valley or the eastern side of the mountain range.
- h. This concentration of domestic market and residential stays on Mount Lebanon and in the northern governorates, despite the proximity of multiple other areas for tourism, does not translate into higher tourism visits to the Bekaa Valley or the eastern side of the mountain range.
- i. In terms of international markets, the mild weather, green landscapes, friendly hospitality, and multicultural nature of Lebanon have attracted Middle Eastern markets. On this regard, these markets and the Lebanese diaspora visiting Lebanon are less affected by security constraints or perceptions. It does not prevent them from visiting the country, as happens with European and North American markets (many of which countries still have travel warnings dating back to 2010).
- j. Marketing and promotion have done little to change the reputation of the country as insecure and conflictive. Nevertheless, the Lebanon has all the elements needed to reposition itself in alignment with the new trends in tourism, where the traveller is looking for authenticity and unique experiences.
- k. Despite the good efforts to promote tourism in Lebanon, there is only low awareness of the attractive and high-quality mountain areas. There is no clear marketing strategy, particularly to promote and position the mountain areas of country.

- l. During the pandemic and previous negative episodes there has not been any crisis communication protocol for tourism to help end negative or wrong perceptions.
- m. In terms of tourism supply, the legal framework is outdated and needs adjustments to keep the tourism activities competitive. There has been a steep increase in nature-based or ecotour operators, but most operate outside the law or are completely illegal. This is causing unfair competition, poor quality services and products, and a rise in safety issues – notably regarding adventure tourism activities.
- n. There is a wide range of protected areas or archaeological sites, but with an inadequate financial model to preserve and manage them properly. Additionally, many of them have no tourism activities, services, or options for local businesses within these areas, and there are no clear business models to follow when managing them (with few exceptions).
- o. There is a strong concentration of tourism quality and quantity at middle altitudes and in some districts and villages. A strategy for tourism development considering geographic and tourism conditions should be defined, and all districts should be managed within a strategic district portfolio for tourism development.
- p. Tourism at some traditional destinations is linked to ski resorts that operate only seasonally and do so with outdated tourism methods.

PART TWO

9 . SUSTAINABLE TOURISM STRATEGY FOR MOUNTAINS OF LEBANON

19.1 Introduction

The high-level diagnostic done, and the different comments and insights found, allow us to structure the Sustainable Tourism Strategy for Mountains of Lebanon.

Various parts of the strategy have been discussed with tourism authorities to get their opinion or official decision – what is called the Vision of the Sustainable Tourism Strategy for Mountains (Vision). Other stakeholders were consulted about the current situation of tourism in the Lebanese Mountains, as well as for their ideas about the challenges of these areas and the possible solutions. Intensive field visits and interviews were done to get first-hand ideas and perceptions and to understand ways of life and social dynamics, as well as to assess the tourism situation in different districts. Additionally, deep secondary data analysis from a variety of plans, strategies, current programmes, and several research projects were perused, and their inputs structured for diagnosis and identification of challenges, gaps, and opportunities. All in all, the whole process has led to the current proposal for a Sustainable Tourism Strategy for Mountains of Lebanon.

The Strategy follows the conceptual structure explained in the introduction of this document. Nevertheless, there have been some subtle changes to provide the kind of strategy that Lebanon needs.

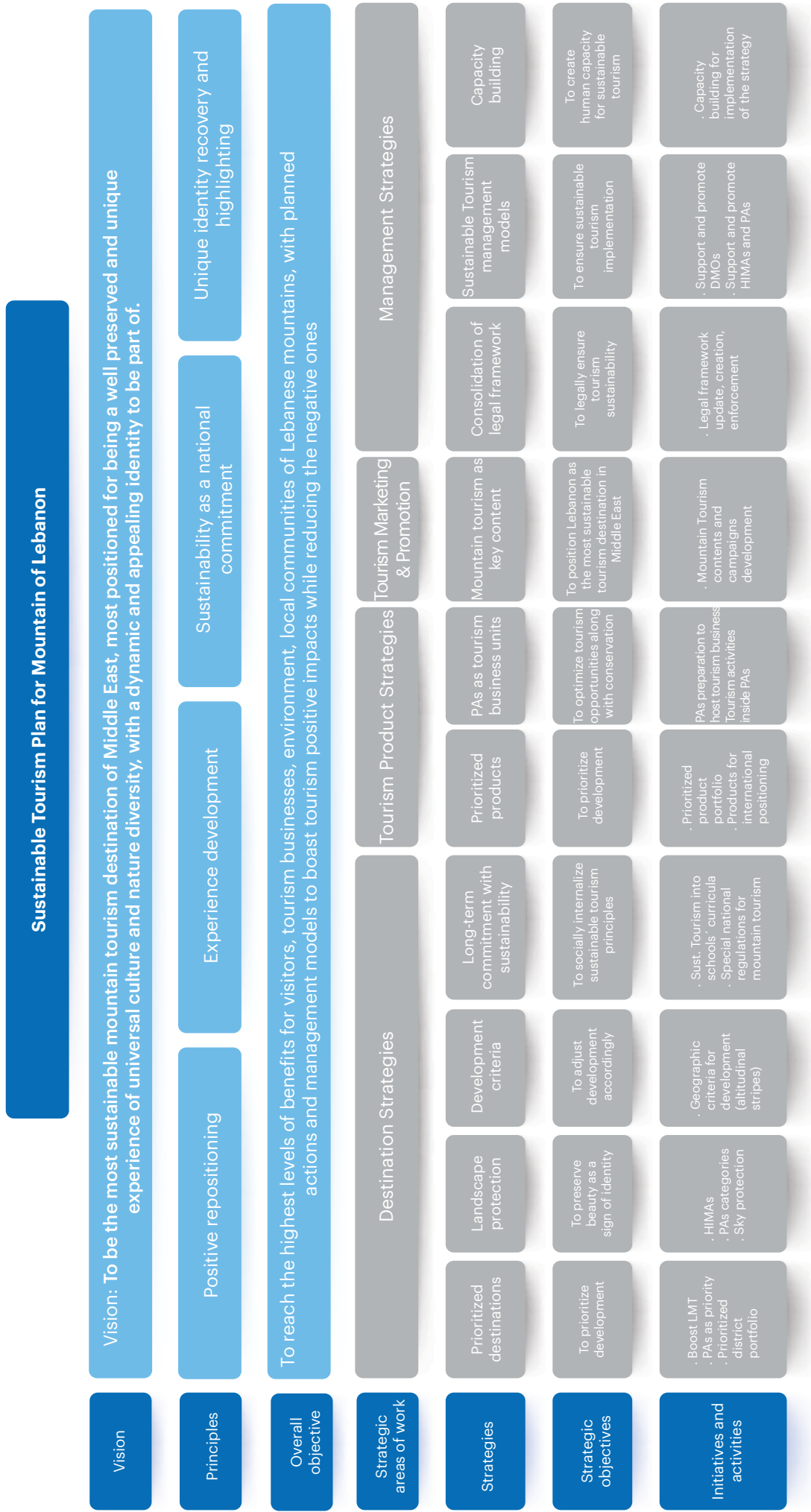
The Strategy has:

- 1 vision
- 4 principles
- 4 strategic areas of work
- 10 strategies with their objectives
- 18 initiatives with their tasks to follow the strategies
- several recommended goals for each initiative, with their time schedule for implementation and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

The overall strategy can be summarized and presented in the following scheme:

The Vision has been officially finalized following discussions and adjustments of three options. The four development principles are the backbone concepts that guide any tourism development of the Strategy. At that point the objective of the whole Strategy is to put forward, as well as a brief mention about the inner objectives of this document itself. What follows is a set of four areas, which in turn produce a cluster of ten strategies. Each strategy has one or more initiatives. Finally, each initiative is composed of a set of activities and tasks for potential stakeholders to become involved in, as well as suggestions of desired outcomes and their KPIs by which to follow up progress and results.

Figure 69. Strategy Conceptual Structure



10 . VISION OF THE SUSTAINABLE TOURISM STRATEGY FOR MOUNTAINS

A mission statement defines what type of tourism development the country is in, and why the national strategy exists and what purpose it serves. The goal of the Lebanon vision is to get the tourism sector excited about National Tourism Strategy and to motivate the stakeholders to become part of it. The vision statement answers the question, "What does Lebanon want to become with its tourism in mountains?" It expresses the country's desired long-term position as a mountain tourism destination, either national or international, and it is addressed to all tourism related stakeholders. It is important to mention that a vision should be maintained over a long period along with the national strategy. Nevertheless, and even though a vision statement rarely changes since it expresses a desired situation over the long term, some changes and adjustments can be made along the way.

The vision statement is the first milestone of the whole strategy. It contributes to the mission statements of the various mountain tourism shareholders, and it aligns values and principles to follow with the national strategy.

The vision statement for the Sustainable Tourism Strategy for Mountains of Lebanon could be defined according to several different perspectives: domestic, international, or mixed, and the vision statement presented here has considered all the different elements. The lists below do not intend to be exhaustive but rather to illustrate and provide inputs for the vision statement desired.

a. What is Lebanon as a mountain destination?

It is a **Mediterranean** country of the **Middle East**, with **low and medium-high longitudinal mountains** from north to south, a wide plateau, and transversal valleys from east to west. Its **concentration** in a narrow strip of land creates **steeped orography** in relatively **short distances** and causes a rapid **change of landscapes**.

b. What do mountains have for tourism in Lebanon? What is unique, different, relevant in terms of tourism?

The mountain area of Lebanon has urban and residential areas as well as rural and nature areas. The Lebanon Mountains are home to unique World

Heritage Sites, such as Anjar, Baalbeck, the Qadisha Valley (the Holly Valley), and the Forest of Cedars of God.

In terms of built landscape, it has hamlets, villages, and small to medium-size cities, as well as agriculture fields, ski resorts, dams and other major infrastructure examples, and several archaeological sites, including some that are designated as World Heritage ones.

In terms of natural landscapes, there are high, medium, and low mountains; deep uninhabited valleys; striking rocky landscapes; desert areas; forests and rivers; protected natural areas; iconic species (such as the Lebanese Cedar), underground waters; and open and clear skies.

In terms of intangible heritage and expressions, there is a wide range of beliefs (about 19 to 22), with some iconic areas such as Qadisha Valley as the most representative of the Maronite Church, iconic mosques in Baalbeck, iconic churches dedicated to the Virgin Mary, the largest population of Druze believers, etc. There is also rich culture and history as well as a well-educated and cultural society (one of the highest Human Development Index scores of all Middle East countries). Furthermore, there are traditions of all types and expressions, mostly linked to agriculture, beliefs, local crops, food, music, ways of life, etc. Lebanon has a modern and open society, where it is easy to find people speaking more than two languages (Arabic and English as well as French and others).

All in all, the blend of all these people, history, beliefs, traditions, and culture is itself sufficiently unique to provide a rewarding tourism experience.

c. What can be experienced in the Lebanon Mountains as a visitor?

Diversity, the sense of **hospitality**, **traditions** and **culture**, **beliefs** and **history** can all be experienced in the Lebanon Mountains. The **natural beauties**, **open landscapes**, local **flavour**, and sense of **unique natural sites and species** inspire **introspection**, **spirituality**, and **joi de vivre**.

Based on the previous list of elements, the Vision Statement for Tourism Development of Lebanese Mountains for the following 10 years (horizon 2032) can be proposed as the following options:

Option 1.

Based on comparing Lebanon's mountain tourism with other regional or international mountain tourism destinations, focused on international markets:

"To be the best positioned sustainable mountain tourism destination of all the Middle Eastern countries as the contemporary meeting point of a unique concentration and diversity of universal culture and nature."

The vision could be enhanced by listing specific elements and/or features such as: heritage, people, hospitality, modernity, spirituality, and traditions, landscapes, history, etc.

The vision should highlight Lebanon's position as a modern and well-prepared mountain destination in the region, as well as its diversity of unique tourism assets and their links with some of the most important civilizations of the world (using the key word "universal").

Option 2.

Based on Lebanon's mountain tourism for domestic markets:

"To be the most preserved natural and cultural landscape of Lebanon where everyone can respectfully live, enjoy, learn, and participate in activities in a sustainable and healthy manner; where they can experience and discover a wide diversity of traditions and ecosystems, and where they can be a part of a dynamic and appealing identity."

This vision seeks to express the unique nature of mountains in Lebanon and their importance for Lebanese identity and way of life, either historically or in modern times. At the same time, it intends to reinforce awareness about conservation of mountain landscapes and other elements that are a common asset of the Lebanese people in general.

Option 3.

A combination of the previous two:

Option 3.a. "To be the most sustainable mountain tourism destination of the Middle East, best positioned for being a well preserved and unique expression of universal cultural and natural diversity, with a dynamic and appealing identity to be part of."

Option 3.b. "The Lebanon Mountains are a unique experience of the highest standard of sustainable tourism in the Middle East and offer the most appealing diversity of cultural and nature-based activities for everyone."

Option "a" blends and simplifies options 1 and 2. Option "b" resets the statement and expresses it as a unique experience of what tourism will be in the Lebanese Mountains. It provides the "unique experiential" perspective of sustainability, attractiveness, and diversity for everyone that only Lebanon can provide in region.

After discussions and different options and perspectives, the final Vision for tourism development in the Lebanese Mountains is:

To be the most sustainable mountain tourism destination of the Middle East, best positioned for being a well preserved and unique experience of universal cultural and natural diversity, with a dynamic and appealing identity to be part of.

11 . PRINCIPLES OF THE SUSTAINABLE TOURISM STRATEGY FOR MOUNTAINS

Strategy principles are the fundamental rules and guidelines that serve as a foundation for reasoning and decision-making about the longer-term direction. When used properly, strategy principles help to grow and achieve competitive advantages.³ Principles are the key tools that align decision-making for mountain tourism in Lebanon.

There are four main principles of the Sustainable Tourism Strategy for Mountains of Lebanon:

1. Positive Re-Positioning

Lebanon once enjoyed the positive position of being a modern, peaceful, and progressive country, as well as a center of culture in the Middle East region. Unfortunately, in more recent years that positive position evolved into one of an unsafe and conflictive country, without a clear tourism image. The mountain destinations of Lebanon have the potential and the opportunity to regain this positive positioning, showcasing an appealing country full of cultural expressions, Mediterranean traditions, vestiges of ancient cultures, and as the cradle of the Mediterranean spirit. Safe and soft nature-based activities in the mountains are aligned with recent international post-pandemic trends. The principle is to take advantage of the new mountain development of tourism to re-position Lebanon as a safe, healthy, and boosting destination, with an appealing blend of international high-level natural and cultural assets.

2. Experience Development

Many assets of mountains in Lebanon are remarkably attractive because of their beauty and/or history and are to be found throughout the country. Nevertheless, many assets lack experiential activities to make visitors create emotional linkages to the sites and destinations. Additionally, all these assets are surrounded by or near villages with plenty of options to highlight their traditions, culture, local products, and skills, and that can provide services and activities for visitors. Thus, a principle of this strategy is to keep an 'experience development' approach for all assets and destinations. This will increase the attractiveness of current tourism destinations

(reserves, villages and towns, ski resorts, trails) while also opening new business opportunities for local communities. Finally, and especially for DMOs, protected areas, and Himas, experience development will translate into tourism products and services. This will provide the opportunity to raise incomes for their economic self-sustainability.

3. Sustainability as a National Commitment

The strategy looks for long-term protection and conservation. Mountain landscapes, either natural or cultural, are the most relevant assets where tourism will occur. If they are not preserved in their beauty and authenticity, their appeal will decrease, and so will tourism. The strategy states that any tourism development in the mountain areas of Lebanon will work for the long-term conservation of destinations and assets as a key condition for tourism attractiveness and, therefore, its sustainability. This involves, in addition to the traditional four pillars of sustainability (social, environmental, management, economic), landscape protection, water protection, and forest and vegetation cover protection. This principle also has linkages with the following one.

4. Unique Identity Recovery and Highlighting

Social identity is built on shared historical components determined by environmental conditions. On this regard, Lebanon and its mountains have special environmental features that have shaped a unique identity. Furthermore, this identity was disseminated along the Mediterranean coast to other places, creating a common Mediterranean-wide identity. This principle states that any tourism development should tend to recover and highlight these traditional values, this culture grown in this mountain environment. This requires landscape protection (previous principle) and will support new positioning (first principle).

3. <https://cmoe.com/glossary/what-are-business-strategy-principles/>

I 12. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

I12.1 Strategic Objective

This document provides a sustainable tourism development strategy for mountains of Lebanon with indications about initiatives and activities to reach the vision and goals. It intends to establish the strategic framework of tourism development to ensure the best outcomes for the country in terms of being a highly competitive mountain tourism destination in the region, with the highest standards of tourism quality, a very appealing experience for visitors, and within a well-preserved biodiversity and cultural landscape.

To reach the vision, tourism development should be sustainable. This means that it should not be compromised by poor performances or negative impacts that affect tourism's main assets. This simply means that tourism must be conducted without harming nature or local identity. Additionally, to be sustainable tourism activities should benefit the environment and local communities. Specifically, tourism should bring socio-economic benefits (i.e., employment, entrepreneurship, economic multiplier effect in local economic activities, social self-esteem, and peace, etc.) while also protecting and preserving the environment. Finally, to manage the whole system and to provide the minimum conditions of sustainability, tourism management should provide models aligned with the previous conditions. In summary, tourism development under this strategy should ensure natural and cultural preservation not only for the sake of the environment and society but for its own benefit as a business. If all components are in balance, tourism competitiveness will be an outcome.

The objective of this strategy is:

- To reach the highest levels of benefits for visitors, tourism businesses, environment, and local communities of the Lebanese Mountains with planned actions and management models to boost tourism's positive impacts while reducing the negative ones.

The specific goals of this strategic objective will be defined by each strategy and initiative, defining the outcomes foreseen for each of them.

I12.2 Objectives of this Document

This strategy as a document is designed to reach the following objectives:

- a. To set a vision and principles to follow that will lead the sectors' development to reach the best outcomes.
- b. To set strategic areas of intervention to ensure sustainable tourism in the mountain areas of Lebanon that prepares and guarantees conditions for short and long-term benefits.
- c. To propose initiatives to best reach positive impacts of tourism for the environment, the identity of local communities, socio-economic opportunities, and working frameworks for managers.

As with other plans and strategies, this is a living document and could be revised progressively based on results, feedback, lessons learned, new trends, etc., along the implementation of activities. Many actions and activities are already being implemented by stakeholders. Some of these activities are mentioned in this document to provide support to key stakeholders as they seek to attain the final vision of this strategy. Many other stakeholder initiatives are not mentioned, but the strategy is open to involve them as we go forward with its implementation.



13 . STRATEGIES AND INITIATIVES

Strategies help to answer key questions about how to profit from opportunities and strengths, and how to minimize weaknesses and threats. Strategies for tourism development in the Lebanese Mountains are classified into four fields:

Destination Strategies, or Territorial Approach

How to deal with tourism destinations in terms of priorities to develop, what to develop in each area, conservation, land management, etc.

Tourism Product Strategies, or Experiences Approach

Which experiences should be focused as principals and which as complements? Which tourism products could attract international or domestic markets? Which supply should be promoted and of what categories and features?

Tourism Marketing and Promotion

or which should be the strategy to position each destination and/or tourism product.

Management Strategy

or how to set the management tools and frameworks to ensure that the previous strategies could be implemented to reach their goals.

All strategies are assumed to be led and managed primarily by the Ministry of Tourism, which will be the primary coordinator and manager of the whole Sustainable Tourism Strategy for Mountains. The Ministry of Tourism is not the only implementer since tourism is an across-the-board sector and there are many stakeholders that must and should be involved. This involvement and coordination are essential for the strategy's implementation.

13.1 Mountain Tourism Destinations Strategies

The mountain tourism destinations strategy deals with a variety of issues. In terms of tourism development, the strategy intends to define which areas have the best conditions for tourism. In terms of the potential impacts that tourism could bring, two main issues arise: landscape and water pollution. Finally, what type of tourism activities should be promoted in mountain areas.

Managing the landscape of tourism destinations is crucial for sustainability and for competitiveness. This management requires a two-fold approach: one for specifically defined areas (such as protected areas), another for reinforcing local management and social ownership. As Abu Arrage and others explain about tourism landscape

management in Lebanon, "Tourism stakeholders have, to some extent, the opportunity to fashion the future to their needs rather than simply to regard future events as beyond their control. In an increasingly turbulent and rapidly changing world, innovation and development driven by both internal and external circumstances will continue, but destinations and firms not adjusting their strategies as their environments change will have difficulty maintaining competitive advantages. How the country will manage its natural heritage will set the pace for rural and nature-based tourism in the future."⁴

Under this vision, the destination strategies for tourism development in the Lebanese Mountains are:

4. Abou Arrage et al, "Heritage and Landscape Sustainable Management in the Tourism Industry – Landscapes and Tourism in Lebanon: Between Degradation and Conservation," University of Helsinki, Leadership and Governance for Sustainable Tourism (2014)

13.1.1 Strategy 1. Priority Destinations for Mountain Tourism in Lebanon

Goal: to define which should be the priority destinations for tourism development

Destination strategy 1 – Specific strategies for prioritized destinations: to focus on key areas that have better conditions for sustainable tourism development, considering all perspectives: environmentally, socially, economically, and managerially.

This means that priority destinations will be those with remarkable assets for tourism, good supply conditions and performance, and efficient local management (either consolidated or under formation). This, in turn, suggests that tourism development should prioritize the following destinations.

13.1.1.1 Initiative A. Consolidate and Boost the Lebanon Mountain Trail (LMT)

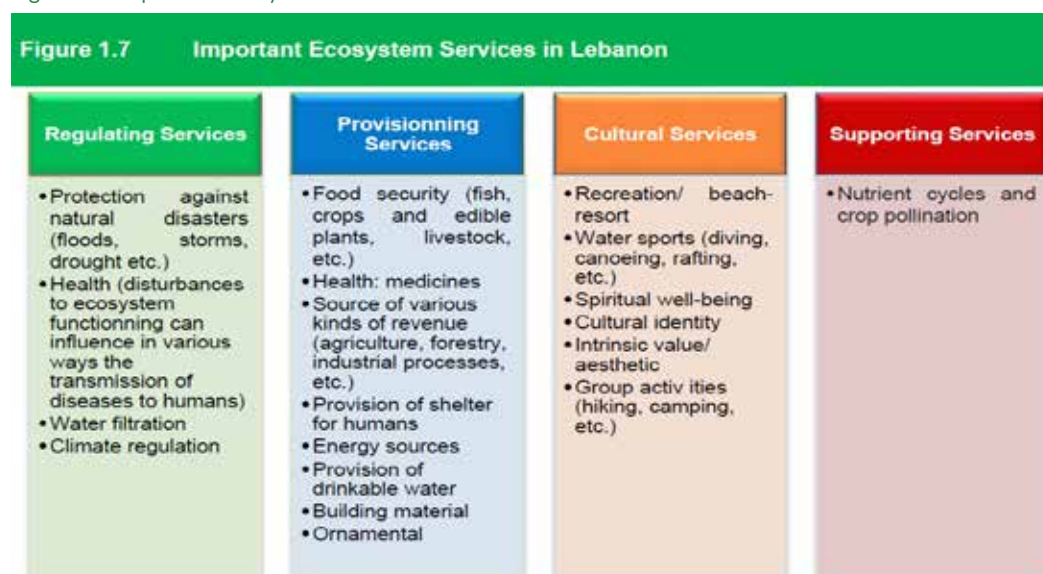
This 470 km trail crosses almost the whole country from north to south, and its multiple influences make it a tourism destination itself. It has been strongly supported by international cooperation agencies, and it has been professionally managed since its creation in 2005. Its international projection and local ownership, combined with the hierarchy of tourism assets along the trail (one World Heritage Site, two Biosphere Reserves, four Nature Reserves, five Protected Areas, five Important Bird Areas, as well as many small and medium villages), make it one of the most important destinations for mountain tourism development in Lebanon. The LMT concept is well positioned and consolidated in Lebanon, and it is expanding to get other mountain trails connected to it, especially from municipalities and areas that have no LMT section crossing their territories.

For more details about the LMT see <https://www.lebanontrail.org/home>.

13.1.1.2 Initiative B. Consider all Protected Areas and Reserves as Priority Destinations for Mountain Tourism.

It is important to think about protected mountain areas as key tourism assets. Protected areas provide a variety of services, tourism among them. Ecosystems are the land basis for these services, and as such all services are affected if the ecosystem is affected. They are interconnected, either for good effects or for bad ones. In terms of tourism, protected areas (PAs) provide intrinsic and spiritual values, as well as attractive platforms for activities. As a result of the pandemic there has been a massive flow of visitors to protected areas. This means that whether PAs are considered destinations by the tourism authorities or not, they will become tourism destination anyway. Mountain PAs, as fragile ecosystems that require careful conservation, must be considered as priority tourism destinations.

Figure 70. Important ecosystem services in Lebanon



Source: MoE/UNEP/GEF, 2016

The project “STEPping up Nature Reserves Capacity – STEP4Nature” is focused on developing these areas, strengthening the Ministry of Environment’s legal and institutional nature reserves framework, and improving their management, monitoring, and evaluation. Nature reserves have been extensively diagnosed in other strategies. At the time of this strategy construction, the STEP4Nature project is working on a detailed baseline of those areas. It will include the tourism potential of each area and how tourism could be a leverage tool for conservation and socio-economic development linked to them. The Ministry of Tourism (MoT) along with the Ministry of Environment (MoE) should work together to identify those protected or natural areas that best suit sustainable tourism development as mountain destinations.

Mountain nature areas are attractive for tourism activities per se. If those areas are protected or are adequately managed to ensure the quality of their landscape, they become key assets to build tourism destinations in the Lebanese Mountains under sustainability criteria. In Lebanon, these conditions are provided by nature reserves, protected areas, Himas, and other classifications.

Currently, there are:

- Nature reserves: 18 – of which 15 are in mountain areas (over 250 meters above sea level); 5 have a Management Plan; and 12 have an Appointed Protected Area Committee.
- Nature reserves in pipeline: 5 – of which 3 are in the final approval process, and 2 are in the preparation phase.
- Nature sites: 21.
- Nature sites in pipeline: 5 in draft stage.
- Himas: 25 – of which 5 are in South Lebanon, 4 in West Bekaa, 2 in Central Bekaa, 3 in North Bekaa, 7 in Mount Lebanon, and 4 in North Lebanon.
- Important Bird Areas: 15

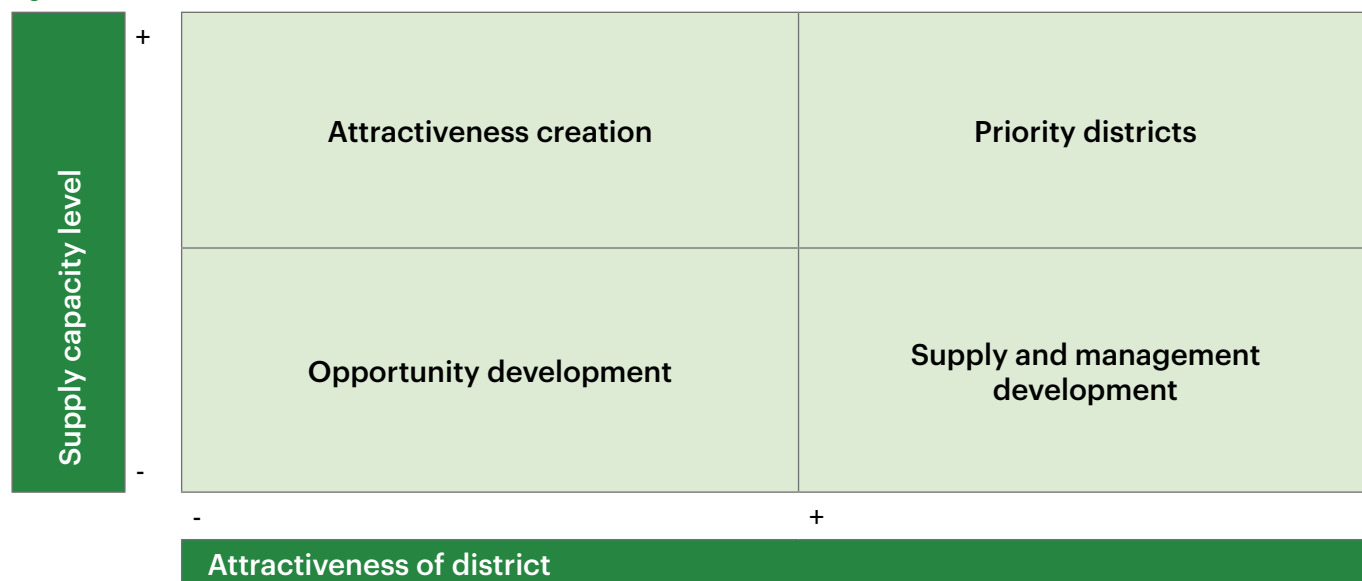
- Important Plant Areas: 20
- Key Biodiversity Areas: 26

As a first stage to define protected areas or reserves as tourism destinations in the mountains, the STEP4Nature project should be supported to provide the criteria for their selection and prioritization. This will provide a prioritized portfolio of areas to work with tourism in Lebanon.

13.1.1.3 Initiative C. Prioritized Districts Portfolio for Sustainable Tourism Development in Mountain Areas

After the diagnosis assessment of all districts in terms of tourism potential, the hierarchy of tourism attractions, their supply and performance, and their current management conditions, a prioritized portfolio can be drawn. Not all the districts and villages have the same priority and strategy for mountain tourism development. Depending on the situation of each district, a different working strategy is recommended, as follows:

Figure 71. Prioritization matrix for districts



a. Priority districts:

Those with better conditions of attractiveness and with better levels of supply, performance, and management should be prioritized. This means to begin by working with them to consolidate their tourism activities, either by supporting the attractiveness of tourism assets and/or infrastructure, or by enhancing their performance with new or better supply and management.

b. Supply and management development districts:

Those with good attractiveness (potential and tourism hierarchy of attractions) but low current capacity of tourism supply (supply volume, performance, management) should work harder on the latter components.

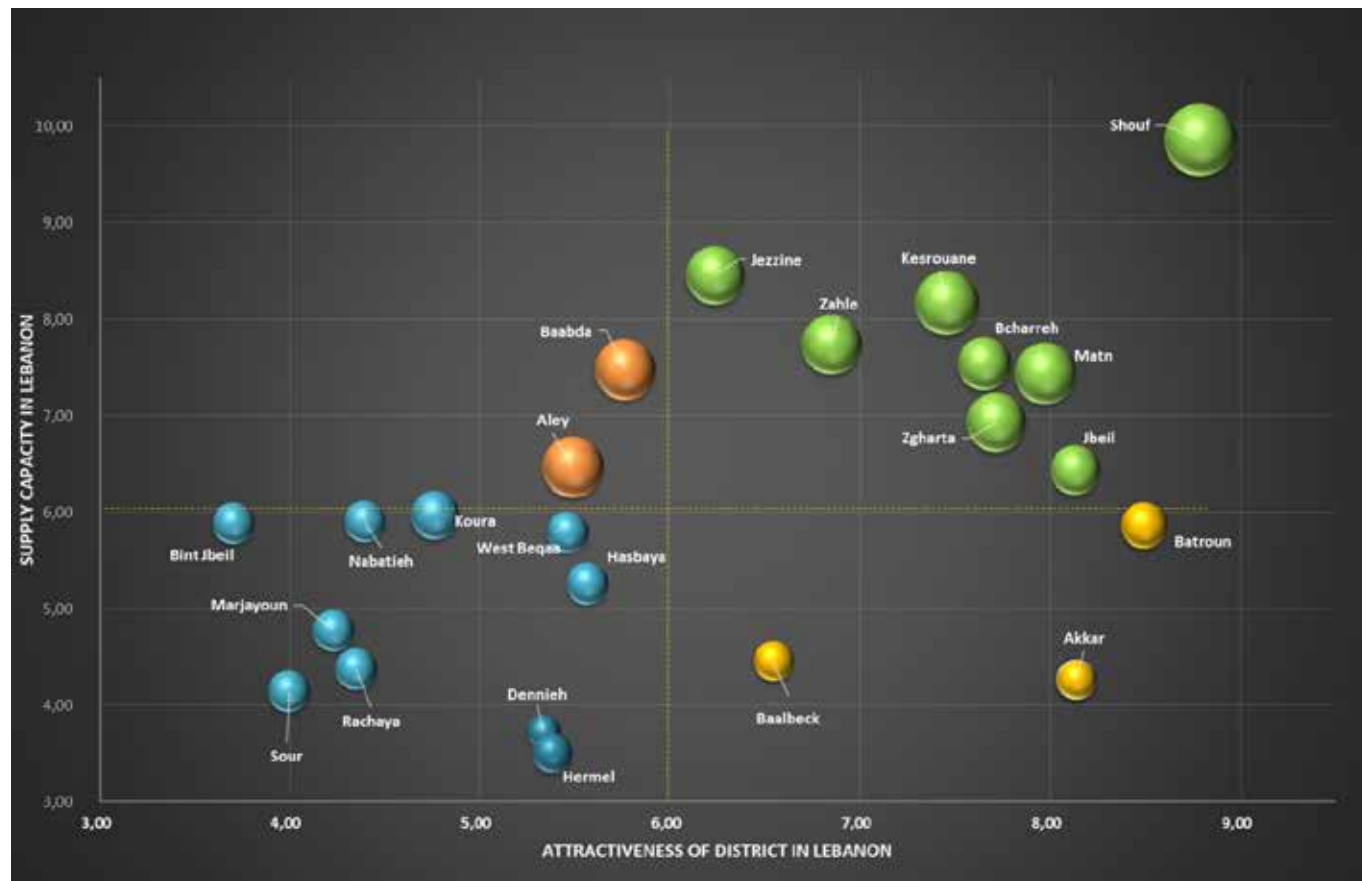
c. Attractiveness creation districts: Districts with high tourism supply capacity but with relatively low attractiveness should work on creating added value to what they already have. This means harder management work and the development of activities or attractions that provide or increase attractiveness (e.g., creating hubs of innovation, academy, science, research, traditional events, appealing markets, or festivals, etc.).

d. Opportunity development districts:

Finally, those districts with low supply capacity and attractiveness should be kept within the portfolio for the longer term or could be developed in the event a good opportunity for tourism arises. Such interventions would be spontaneous and would depend on the opportunity but would not be a priority or part of the planned strategy.

Districts under this last situation are Tyre, Marjayoum, Bint Jbeil, Hermel, Rachaya, Nabatieh, Koura, Donnieh, and Hermel. West Bekaa and Hasbaya are in a border situation, where some efforts can be made to increase their attractiveness and supply capacity to offer better conditions for tourism.

Figure 72. District portfolio priority matrix for mountain tourism in Lebanon



According to this diagnostic assessment, working strategies for the portfolio are four-fold:

- Priority districts:** Chouf, Keserwan, Bcharreh, Matn, Jbeil, Zgharta, Zahle, and Jezzine.
- Supply and management development districts:** Baalbeck, Batroun, and Akkar.
- Attractiveness creation districts:** Aley, Baabda. Potentially, West Bekaa, and Hasbaya could join this group.
- Opportunity development districts:** Tyre, Marjayoum, Bin Jbeil, Rachaya, Nabatieh, Koura, Donnieh

13.1.2 Strategy 2. Landscape protection for tourism

Goal:

To preserve the natural and cultural beauty of the Lebanese Mountains as a sign of identity, for the delight of visitors and the well-being of all stakeholders and the environment.

This goal considers natural and cultural beauty as a key asset for tourism since landscape is the consequence of blending those two components. Geo-morphology, forests, lakes, rivers and creeks, flora, and fauna – they are all natural elements that compose natural landscapes. Architectural features, urban design and landscape, archaeology, rural plantations, and traditions are all part of the mountain cultural landscape and compose the common landscape for visitors and residents alike.

Landscapes are the visual expression of a society's identity. That identity is showcased either with human-built elements (architectural styles, rural crop lands, traditions, etc.) or with the natural features that act as a framework for a specific community's lifestyle. A particular landscape represents its inhabitants' way of living, their traditions, their attachment to land and its history. If those landscapes are attractive and appealing for visitors, preserving them becomes a key measure for the common benefit of multiple stakeholders. Visitors will be delighted by the attractive sceneries; the identity and social self-esteem of the local population will be reinforced; the additional socio-economic benefits of tourism will allow for the better preservation of the areas; fauna and flora will provide their beauty and be protected in exchange; and so on. Thus, landscape protection as a strategy will not only be beneficial for tourism but for the whole destination, which contributes to achieving sustainable development.

On the other hand, one effect of the pandemic's forced confinement was a more intensive use of natural sites, especially by domestic visitors. The impossibility to travel to other countries promoted domestic tourism while the number of foreign visitors declined. As a result, the national tourism market travelled within the country, discovering new places and new sites that were not previously on their tourism agenda. This situation, in addition to the Lebanese social dynamic of seasonal movement from coast to mountains and back, represents a potential threat for natural areas in higher altitudes. The Lebanese are accustomed to spending summers in the mountains and winters by the sea. Because of the pandemic, these summer stays became more and longer in mountain areas. This showcasing of new attractive sites could potentially result in a new wave of summer residences, whereby unplanned and unsustainable real estate would pose a threat to the mountain landscape. In this way, tourism development in mountain areas could start as a beneficial initiative, but it also comes with risks for the environment and for communities. If the landscape is negatively affected by uncontrolled development, it will diminish its attractiveness for tourism, will impact the environment and the fragile ecosystems, and stress local communities, either because of gentrification or through loss of identity – or both.

Destination strategy 2 – Mountain landscape protection for tourism:
protecting natural and cultural landscapes for tourism as a method of sustainable development, providing beneficial multilateral effects.

13.1.2.1

Initiative a. Boost landscapes for tourism using hima as a locally owned tool

Whether one looks at the beautiful valleys and creeks (e.g., Qadisha Valley) or at the open mountain landscapes, Lebanese mountain tourism is well known and well positioned. At many middle-range altitudes the urban location is concentrated in mountain slopes, leaving the valleys as relatively untouched areas with forests, streams, caves, and reefs – all of which could act perfectly as tourism or leisure parks. All these attractive elements must be protected and promoted at the same time, and the Himas model is a suitable tool for doing so.

Al Hima' means a protected area or place. It is a traditional system of management of resources practiced by indigenous people in the Arabian Peninsula. This concept has been used by the **Society for the Protection of Nature in Lebanon (SPNL)** for the conservation of Key Biodiversity Areas and as means of engaging and empowering local communities at its Hima sites. The Hima concept uses traditional, community-based approaches to conservation to achieve the sustainable use of the local natural resources. SPNL is working with the Hima approach in collaboration with municipalities to promote the conservation of nature and the sustainable use of natural resources.

In 2014 the IUCN (Union for Conservation of Nature) voted to recognize the various forms and names of community conservation, such as Al Hima, Mahjar, Agdal, Qoroq, Adat, or any similar systems of community-based management present in West Asia and North Africa, as a holistic approach that empowers local and traditional knowledge, culture, and heritage, including the conservation of natural resources and a boost to livelihoods (<https://www.spnl.org/assad-serhal-explains-why-hima-is-important/>).

Hima is one of the new conservation categories included in the recent Law No. 130/2019 dated 30 April 2019. A municipality, a group of municipalities or a union of municipalities can have one or more Himas. The entire municipal land can be a Hima, if so decided. The key factor is that a Hima must be a bottom-up initiative and one that involves the participation of the community members and the municipality. There are no specific Himas subcategories or concepts. Each Hima will be oriented towards certain activities according to the common decision of the residents of the municipality. Once a Hima is defined, there is a decree that supports it over time and that prevents any change at the political levels or by private interests. The local community is the proponent and the final beneficiary, as well as an active member in the local management committee of the Hima.

The more Himas in mountain destinations, the greater the guarantee of preserving the attractiveness of landscapes for tourism, with indirect social and environmental benefits.

13.1.2.2

Initiative b. Consolidate protected areas categories that preserve landscapes

In addition to the Himas initiative, creation of protected areas as conservation tools in general and for tourism is recommended. On this regard, Strategy 1 b. about considering natural reserves and protected areas as priority destinations already speaks about consolidating those areas.

The strategy intends to boost all nature or rural reserves that have a structured type of management that could enforce landscape protection.

To implement this strategy the Ministry of Tourism (MoT) should align its work with the Ministry of Environment (MoE) and Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) in terms of creating landscape reserves or including them as a new category, if necessary. Protecting landscapes with legal status helps to manage land use and regulate its potential positive and negative effects, since its regulations directly affect the perceived qualities of a site. The Ministry of Tourism (MoT) and its partner ministries could look to create new reserve categories with a specifically leisure perspective.

On this regard, the first step is to consolidate, boost, and enhance the national system of protected areas of Lebanon, which the Protected Areas Framework Law No. 130/2019 dated 30 April 2019 has recently defined and restructured into four categories. This strategy for mountain tourism aims to consolidate the national system, boost the currently protected areas and reserves network, and enhance it with new relevant areas or concepts.

This strategy should work on at least two levels – not only for natural area protection but also for cultural ones – which would help to protect landscapes for tourism's sake. These categories could be:

- **Protected landscape in general:**

This is like the landmark category but including cultural landscapes. The main component to protect is its representativeness of the local identity, either natural or cultural, along with its beauty, uniqueness, and/or rarity. As an example, see the case study of Napa Valley, California, below.

Case: Napa Valley Landscape Protection – Quick facts about the Ag Preserve and Napa Council Conservation Regulations

Quick facts about ag preserve

- This landmark set of zoning laws, which encompasses Ag Preserve and Ag Watershed lands, established agriculture as the highest and best use of the land in Napa County
- The Ag Preserve was established as AP and AW zoning in 1968 to protect agriculture for future generations; this was the first zoning ordinance of its kind in the country
- Planted vineyard land makes up 9% of Napa County land, totalling around 45,000 acres
- 37,100 acres of land (7.3% of the County) are protected in perpetuity through Conservation Agreements between landowners and the Land Trust of Napa County
- Nationally, we lose nearly 40 acres of farmland every hour due to urban sprawl; however, not one acre of Ag Preserve zoned land has been lost to urban use since its adoption
- According to the American Farmland Trust, an acre of agricultural land on average produces 58 times fewer GHG emissions than an acre of urban use.



Since 1991, Napa County growers have complied with Napa County's Conservation Regulations. As of April 9, 2019, the Napa County Board of Supervisors amended the County's Conservation Regulations with the adoption of the Water Quality and Tree Protection Ordinance (WQTPO), thereby enhancing requirements for stream, wetland, municipal reservoir setbacks, and increasing tree canopy retention and preservation effective May 10, 2019. These regulations include:



- Stream setbacks scientifically based on slope (25 – 150 ft or more)
- Minimum retention of 70% canopy in Agricultural Watershed (AW) and all municipal watersheds
- Minimum 40% shrub/brush cover retention in all municipal watersheds
- Permanent cover cropping on hillsides
- No earth-disturbing activities between October 15 and April 1 (September 15 and April 1 in municipal watersheds)
- Preparation of erosion control measures and annual property winterization by October 15 (September 15 in municipal watersheds)
- Prohibit earthmoving within 500 feet of the Kimball Reservoir and Bell Canyon Reservoir, or within 200 feet of any other sensitive domestic water supply (measured from top of bank).
- Additional enhanced protections for municipal watershed areas to promote water security
- All vineyard Erosion Control Plans must be prepared by a state-certified engineer with special local knowledge of Napa County regulations
- Engineers are required to take a test to qualify to certify vineyard Erosion Control Plans in Napa County
- Preservation or replacement mitigation at a minimum ratio of 3:1 for removal of vegetation on slopes up to 50%; allow preservation or replacement mitigation at a minimum 2:1 ratio within stream setbacks
- Exemption for agricultural projects of 5 acres or less on slopes less than 30%, limit of once per parcel

Source: <https://napagrowers.org/conservation-landscape>



- **Reinforce voluntary private landscape conservation:**

This is strictly focused on landscape protection and is basically a private initiative. As defined in Law No. 130/2019 dated 30 April 2019, the option of private owners to voluntarily dedicate their property for protection or conservation of unique or relevant features, for the common good, should be promoted. On this regard, this strategy intends to go beyond natural properties to include cultural landscape features, such as rural lands, hamlets, neighbourhoods, distinguished buildings, streets layouts and visual atmosphere, vineyard plots, a group of building façades, courtyards, etc. See the case below about conservation easements.

Case: Napa Valley Landscape Protection – Land Trust Napa County/Conservation Easements

What is a conservation easement?

A conservation easement (also known as a voluntary conservation agreement) is a legal agreement that is used by landowners to protect the natural, agricultural, and scenic resources of their land. The landowner retains ownership of the land and may continue to use the land for agriculture, recreation, or other open space uses.

Conservation easements restrict certain uses such as industrial and commercial activities but may allow for residential and commercial agricultural uses.

Generally, conservation easements are flexible and tailored to meet the landowner's individual needs while protecting the unique natural, open space or agricultural characteristics of the property.

Conservation easements are donated to a non-profit conservation organization, such as the Land Trust of Napa County, which bears the responsibility to inspect the land periodically and enforce the landowner's restrictions in perpetuity.

Source: <https://napalandtrust.org/conservation-easements/>



13.1.2.3 Initiative C. Sky protection

Protection of skies is part of landscape protection. Indeed, landscape protection in general is a consequence of protecting skies as well. Mountain areas are characterized by clean skies that allow for the enjoyment of bluer colours and clearer night skies. These features increase in desert climates, such as the Lebanese high mountains and Bekaa Valley.

Sky landscape can be affected by air pollution and luminous pollution. This means that if sky landscapes are protected, they will require a reduction in both air and luminous pollution. Besides the tourism benefits of protecting skies, there will be positive impacts for biodiversity and human health. The negative effects of artificial lights on living things at night include inhibition of melatonin production (the hormone responsible for regulating rest, metabolic processes, and biological clock), conduct and mating patterns modifications, feeding patterns modifications, migration patterns alterations, etc. On this regard, migrating birds in Lebanon could be attracted to cities, where they could die due to crashing or to exhaustion from flying around the light source.

This strategy proposes sky protection for tourism based primarily on economic considerations, but there are secondary effects that are beneficial for the whole destination, either for humans or biodiversity. The strategy requires technical and luminosity limits for public, industrial, and ornamental lighting, as well as illuminated advertising signs and others that could affect the sky.⁵

In terms of tourism, protecting the national beauty of the mountain skies will guarantee landscape protection as a tourism asset for attracting visitors.

This will be due to the enhanced colours of the sky as well as to the types of activities that a visitor can enjoy that are linked to sky beauty, such as stargazing in its various ways, concepts, intensities, and for different segments (families, children, scientific study, etc.). Finally, besides the attractiveness for domestic markets, the international exposure of protected skies is an asset for the country itself, especially for northern markets such as Europeans, who do not have such sky cleanliness throughout the year.

To accomplish this strategy, there are international organizations that could provide technical and marketing support. The International Dark-Sky Association works to protect the night skies for present and future generations (<https://www.darksky.org/>). The Starlight Initiative is designed as an international campaign in defence of the values associated with the night sky and the general right to observe the stars. It is supported by the International Astronomic Union, the World Trade Organization, and UNESCO (<https://en.fundacionstarlight.org/contenido/44-history.html>).

5. See <https://www.paiscircular.cl/ciudad/norma-de-contaminacion-luminica-se-extiende-a-todo-chile-para-proteger-el-cielo-nocturno-letreros-y-canchas-se-apagaran-a-medianoche/>.

Case: IDA and Starlight Foundation

IDA Dark Sky Sanctuaries

An IDA Dark Sky Sanctuary is public or private land that has an exceptional or distinguished quality of starry nights and a nocturnal environment that is protected for its scientific, natural, or educational value, its cultural heritage and/or public enjoyment (sanctuaries in Chile, New Zealand, South Africa, others).

<https://www.darksky.org/our-work/conservation/idsp/sanctuaries/>

Starlight initiative and certifications

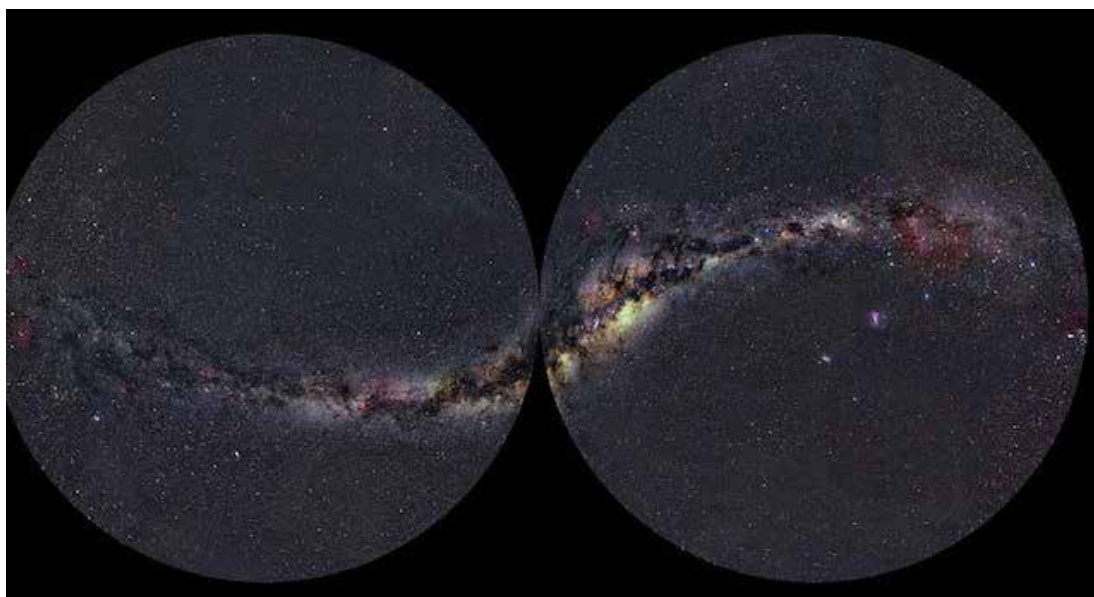
It is open to the participation of all scientific, cultural, environmental, and citizens' organizations and associations, as well as public institutions and other public and private bodies willing to effectively cooperate in the conservation of clear skies and the dissemination of the knowledge related with their observation. The final aim of the initiative is to strengthen the importance of clear skies for humankind, emphasizing and introducing the value of this endangered heritage for science, education, culture, technological development, nature conservation, tourism and as a quality-of-life factor. The Starlight Foundation has created a certification system whereby those areas that have excellent sky quality and represent an example of protection and conservation are accredited. They are scenarios that incorporate the observation of the sky as part of the natural, scenic, cultural, or scientific heritage and encourage "Star Tourism" (i.e., Astro tourism). This System is based on the principles contained in the «Declaration on the Defence of the Night Sky and the Right to the Light of the Stars» (La Palma Declaration, 2007).

<https://en.fundacionstarlight.org/contenido/42-what-are-they.html>

Source: <https://napalandtrust.org/conservation-easements/>



<https://en.fundacionstarlight.org>



<https://www.darksky.org/get-involved/>

13.1.3 Strategy 3. Tourism development following specific criteria

Goal:

To promote tourism development at destinations following pragmatic criteria according to the site needs and its features.

Destination strategy 3 – Criteria for tourism development at destinations: tourism development must be done according to what is best for the country as whole, combining the destinations' conditions for tourism, their current situation and geographical features, the tourism dynamics, and certain goals to optimize the business sustainability at each site. Tourism development should be oriented based on criteria that help its success and sustainability.

What should be promoted to develop in mountain destinations of Lebanon? This strategy intends to provide criteria for tourism development at mountain destinations. According to each destination features, different options of tourism activities and businesses are less or more feasible. Not all destinations are suitable for rural tourism, hard adventure, skiing, historical tourism, or wine tourism. This strategy intends to provide a guideline for types of tourism development at various destinations. With them, the Ministry of Tourism (MoT) will know what kind of investments to promote in different areas. The main variable to consider for this strategy is the geographic location.

13.1.3.1 Initiative a. Geographic criteria for tourism developments

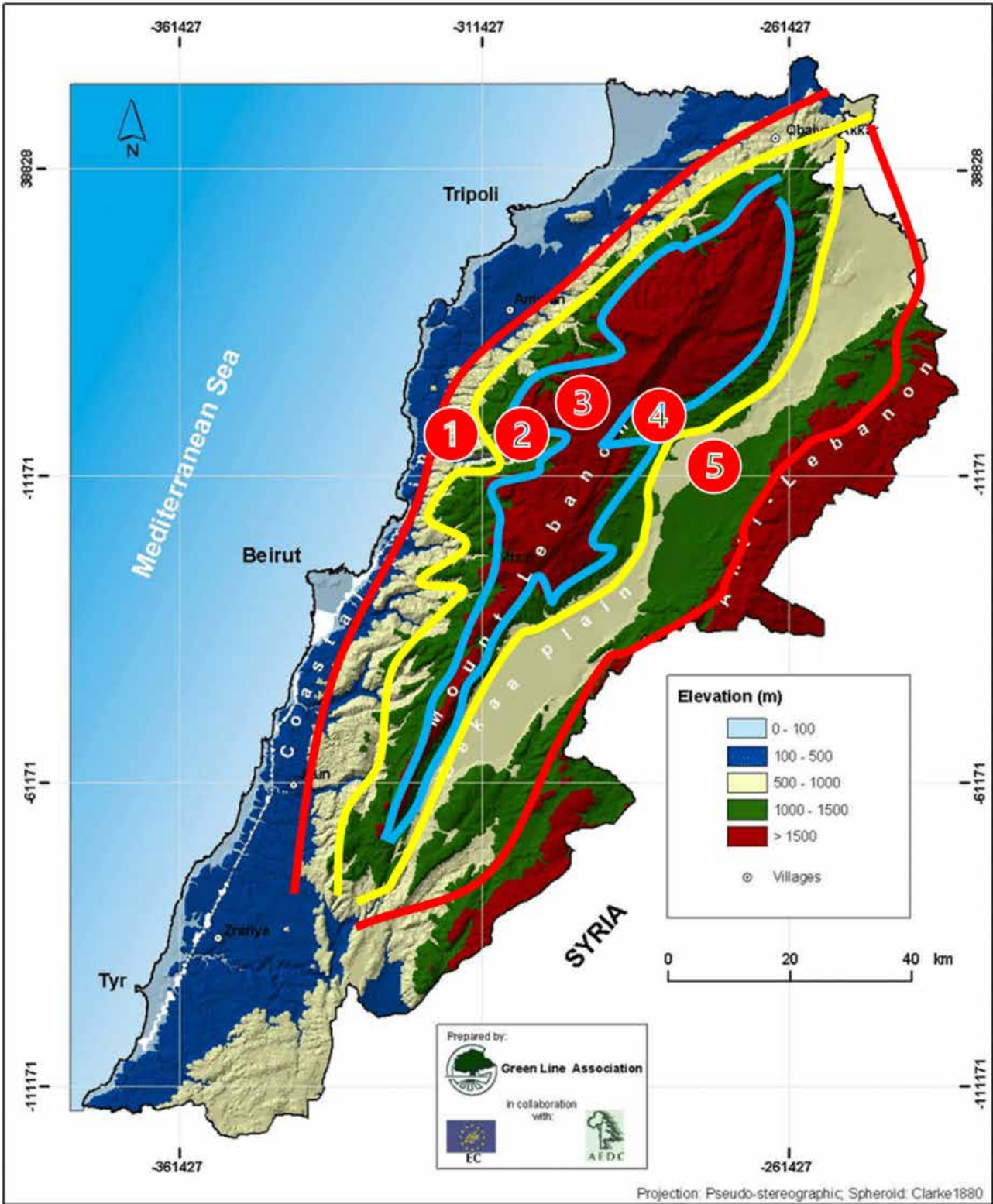
Lebanon's geography layout could be represented by longitudinal stripes going from north to south (NE-SW). Each of these stripes has a specific altitude, ecosystem, social dynamics, and current tourism supply and potential. According to these geographic features, each stripe could have different levels and types of tourism development.

On this regard, the strategy defines a set of preliminary draft criteria for sustainable tourism development initiatives by each stripe. In a second stage following this strategy, detailed criteria should be listed for each area. These criteria would help the tourism authority to lead and advise new investors, new entrepreneurs, and municipalities in their initiatives. The authority would provide indications about what can be done and what

should not, according to specific features for each area. One way to implement the strategy could be by creating incentive packages aligned with those criteria for each area; coaching activities, including close coordination, and training sessions with municipalities to ensure their alignment with these types of tourism; and, finally, coordination with investment and entrepreneurship forums to provide guidelines for the coming tourism initiatives. An even stronger intervention to implement the strategy could be to transform those criteria into municipal decrees or laws, which would make them mandatory for any new tourism investment in the area and could thus help to provide criteria for the Himas to be created.

The areas and preliminary criteria to follow are:

Figure 73. Geographic areas for tourism development criteria for mountain tourism in Lebanon



Tourism development area 1: low mediterranean slope

○ Features in brief:

This area is between 500 to 1,000 meters, where most of the Lebanon population is located as their first residence or summer home. It is highly populated and urban developed, with rare pristine natural sites, steep and narrow streets, and open views to the Mediterranean.

○ Main tourism business to develop:

Mainly tourism activities for leisure where possible, tour guides in towns, monuments or cultural assets, as well as nature-based activities where possible. Hotels and accommodation development could be of higher volume. To encourage restoring traditional houses and buildings for accommodations, finding operation business models for owners who do not want nor to have the means to maintain those buildings.

○ Quality of tourism development:

Depending on location, a full range of qualities can be developed. All developments must follow sustainability criteria as part of quality (see annexes for building guidelines).

○ Density of development:

medium to high density.

○ Main target segments:

Families, tourists of all ages, mainly domestic market, Lebanese diaspora visiting friends and relatives.

○ Suggested infrastructures:

Pathways to ease mobility, interpretation signals and panels to enhance educational activities and leisure.

Tourism development area 2: mountainous mediterranean side

○ Features in brief:

This area is between 1,000 and 1,500 meters. Even though it is not the most populated area (about 556 villages are in this altitudinal range), it is a popular area for summer residences because of its climate. In some cases, there are ski resorts with real estate developments. There are urban areas on the top of slopes, deep valleys with forests and streams, rural plantations, natural sites with protected areas, steep and narrow streets, and open views to the Mediterranean. This area also is home to the Qadisha Valley World Heritage Site (Ouadi Qadisha and the Forest of Cedars of God) and the Chouf Biosphere Reserve, which covers the 5 per cent of all Lebanon.

○ Main tourism business to develop:

Mainly tourism activities for leisure where possible, tour guides in nature areas and towns, amateur soft adventure tourism, and hard adventure activities where possible. Should include local production and souvenir shops, groceries and convenience shops, and rural tourism and art craft workshops. Hotels and other accommodation development should be limited to encourage restoring traditional houses and buildings for accommodations. Restaurants should be of a relatively higher standard.

○ Quality of tourism development:

Depending on location, a full range of qualities can be developed, from homestays to upscale hotels. There is more room for upscale and luxury development, understanding luxury as boutique hotels and tailor-made experiences. The number of accommodations should be lower than in area 1, despite the massive affluence of certain destinations (ski resorts in winter, for example). The key factor is to have personalized accommodations based on good and excellent personal experiences. All developments must follow sustainability criteria as part of quality (see annexes for building guidelines).

○ Density of development:

Medium to low density.

○ Main target segments:

Families with children (all ages of children up to university), groups of friends, couples without children, active senior couples, mainly domestic market, and some international market (those indicated by tourism marketing strategies at the Ministry of Tourism), expats living in Lebanon, Lebanese diaspora visiting friends and relatives. Generally, these segments have an upper socio-economic profile.

○ Suggested infrastructures:

To guarantee universal accessibility to protected areas and tourism attractions, trail signs, interpretation panels, and weather shelters.

Tourism development area 3: mountain highlands

○ Features in brief:

This area considers the highlands of Lebanon Mountains, above 1,500 meters. There are rougher climate conditions, a reduction of vegetation, and the appearance of desert areas without forests. Besides the traditional population of local villages (about 85 villages above 1,500 meters, of which only 12 are above 1,900 meters), it is not a residential area for Lebanese citizens. In ski resorts some real estate projects are envisaged. There are natural areas, with both open and rocky landscapes; views either towards the Mediterranean or the Bekaa Valley; cedar, juniper, and oak forests; and protected areas. There are few roads crossing over the Mount Lebanon range from west to east and vice versa, some of which are closed in winter due to snow.

○ Main tourism business to develop:

Adventure tourism destinations, as well as specialized destinations for activities. Soft and hard adventure tourism depending on the site features and activities; the tour guides in nature areas; activities linked to the LMT, ski, and stargazing; and hiking itineraries. Ephemeral accommodations only, such as camping, caravanning, or upper-scale glamping. No fixed accommodation development should be allowed in the upper mountains, only homestays or small boutique hostels with buildings already in place, and with low capacity. Area should provide small-sized tours and activities, higher technical standards of services (because of specialization), and more personalized and exclusive services.

○ Quality of tourism development:

Higher quality standards. Quality value focused on technical expertise, authenticity, exclusivity of experiences (small groups), and personalized services. Upscale and luxury services, ephemeral accommodation businesses (glamping, camping), authentic homestays. Small number of accommodations. All activities, tours, personal services, and developments must follow sustainability criteria as part of quality (see annexes for building guidelines).

○ Density of development:

Low and very low density of activities. In some cases, ephemeral visits to pristine natural areas with short stays and low concentration of visitors. Important to require carrying capacity management of activities. Strict urban growth and building restrictions.

○ Main target segments:

Young to middle age, specialized sports/activities amateurs, professional experts, small groups of friends, domestic and international markets, and expats living in Lebanon. Upper socio-economic profiles.

○ Suggested infrastructures:

To guarantee universal accessibility to protected areas and tourism attractions, trail signs, interpretation panels, and weather shelters.

Tourism development area 4: mountainous bekaa side

○ Features in brief:

This area is like the Mediterranean side in terms of altitude, but with considerably different features in terms of forest, population, and dynamics. Climate conditions are rougher than the Mediterranean side, since it is continental weather without the influence of sea winds. There is a reduction of the volume and height of trees and plants. There are not too many villages in this area (e.g., Yamoune, Ainata), since most are concentrated in the Bekaa Valley, quite close and with good agricultural conditions. This area is characterized by open landscapes and less clouds than the Mediterranean side. The northern area has strong archaeological assets linked with Roman ruins and the Roman pathway.

○ Main tourism business to develop: similar to the Mountain Highlands area:

Specialized activities, soft and hard adventure tourism, tour guides in nature areas, hiking itineraries, and activities linked to the LMT when available. The challenge of this area is to attract visitors and make

them stay overnight, which means the creation of activities and attractive accommodations. A good area for stargazing, since this can be enjoyed by all ages and levels of physical condition. Birdwatching is also an option, considering the migration stream crossing the area. Ephemeral accommodations only, such as camping, caravanning, or upper-scale glamping; no fixed accommodation development should be allowed in this area. Homestays or small boutique hostels that express authenticity and genuine experiences are good options. Low accommodation capacity. Small size of tours and activities. Higher technical standards of services (because of specialization), more personalized and exclusive services.

○ **Quality of tourism development:**

Like the Mountain Highlands: higher quality standards. Quality value focused on technical expertise, authenticity, and exclusivity of experiences (small groups), and personalized services. Upscale and luxury services, ephemeral accommodation businesses (glamping, camping), authentic homestays. Small size accommodation. All activities, tours, personal services, and developments must follow sustainability criteria as part of quality (see annexes for building guidelines).

○ **Density of development:**

Low and very low density of activities. In some cases, ephemeral visits to pristine natural areas with short stays and low concentration of visitors.

○ **Main target segments:**

Young to middle age, specialized sports/activities amateurs, professional experts, small groups of friends. If quality accommodations are developed, couples could also be targeted. Domestic and international markets and expats living in Lebanon. Middle and upper socio-economic profiles.

○ **Suggested infrastructures:**

To guarantee universal accessibility to protected areas and tourism attractions, trail signs, interpretation panels, and weather shelters.

Tourism development area 5: bekaa valley

○ **Features in brief:**

This area goes from 500 to 1,000 meters. This is a longitudinal north-south valley, with continental weather and wide temperature variations between night and day. It has good conditions for crops linked to this thermic amplitude, such as vineyards and grapes, all types of stone fruits, different kinds of potatoes, etc. Rivers and streams provide oasis areas with trees and allow for larger cities, such as Zahle and Baalbeck. There are important nature areas in the southern part (called West Bekaa) and internationally positioned archaeological assets in the northern area, such as the Baalbeck Ruins World Heritage Site, the Anjar Roman ruins, and others.

○ **Main tourism business to develop:**

This area is the rural tourism destination par excellence. The presence of farms along the valley allows for the creation of all types of rural tourism activities and accommodations. This area should develop the Wine Tourism Route of Lebanon. As part of the following strategies about the internationalization of Lebanese tourism products, this area should host a Great Wine Capital of the Global Network. The valley is well positioned as a cultural destination in the northern area, with the Baalbeck Roman ruins as the main cultural attraction as well as the Bohemian atmosphere that was traditionally a part of that city (even though it has been vanishing over time). Additionally, there are religious expressions and relevant assets such as the Bechouat Church, where about 200,000 pilgrims arrive every year: as well as the Sayyida Khawla Shrine with the Great Mosque of Baalbeck, another great attraction for visitors to the city.

Besides rural and cultural tourism, birdwatching is also an option because of the migratory birds and streams. The many tourism activities offered in the valley will motivate visitors to stay longer. Tour guides offering local activities, visits to workshops

and farms, and soft hiking itineraries around lakes or river streams are all recommended for this area. Specialized tourism activities such as caving or speleology or any other hard adventure tourism can be done, depending on the site features and activities. Accommodation appeal is crucial to retain visitors overnight. Authentic and traditional farm accommodation is a recommended option. High-end accommodation linked with wineries would support the international positioning of the area as a wine tourism destination. Boutique hotels with buildings are already in place. Medium-sized accommodations in cities and smaller accommodations in farm and rural areas are suggested. Medium-sized groups for tours and activities could be the option here, considering that the market is made up of families and groups (buses for religious tourism or visiting the Baalbeck ruins).

○ **Quality of tourism development:**

Even though the area has more sites for massive tourism (Baalbeck, religious sites), it is important to provide middle to upper scale accommodations. On the other hand, the relevance of the archaeological sites requires a high-quality tour guide profile (see annex about licensing proposals for tour guides). The focus is on technical knowledge and expertise since the added value in the valley is linked to history and rural technical knowledge. Wine tourism should aim to provide the highest levels of quality for winery visits and accommodations. Finally, the valley can provide activities for all school/academic levels, from children to university students. All activities, tours, personal services, and developments must follow sustainability criteria as part of quality (see annexes for building guidelines).

○ **Density of development:**

Medium-to-low density of activities. Carrying capacity of key archaeological and religious sites should be considered to maintain the essence of the sites and the best visitor experience.

○ **Main target segments:**

Families, elementary school to university students, the middle-aged, small groups of friends, touring groups (tour operators), domestic and international markets, and expats living in Lebanon. All socio-economic profiles aligned with the type of products and services provided.

○ **Suggested infrastructures:**

To guarantee universal accessibility to tourism attractions, trail signs, interpretation panels, and tourism road signs.

The Ministry of Tourism (MoT) could prepare specific packages for promoting those types of tourism development in each area. Also, the authority should identify the list and type of activities and developments that would not receive permits in those areas (permit criteria checklist).

13.1.4 Strategy 4. Mountain Tourism as a Long-Term National Commitment with Sustainability

Goal:

To internalize sustainable tourism principles for mountains in Lebanese society as a mechanism to ensure long-term sustainability.

Destination strategy 4 – Mountain tourism as a long-term national commitment with sustainability: mountain tourism is a socio-economic leverage for sustainability. For its success, it needs structural measures with long-term impacts. The public sector function looks for the common welfare of the country. This strategy is based on structural interventions that would support better tourism as well as provide comprehensive benefits for living conditions in the country.

This strategy focuses its attention on long-term measures. On one hand, to insert sustainability concepts from the early stages of social education, including in school curricula. On the other hand, the strategy promotes regulation of any tourism building, construction, or activity development within the context of regarding a wide impact assessment. Any tourism initiative in the mountains that must complete an environmental impact assessment should consider the impact area with a watershed scope. Finally, the stress of urbanization on mountains should be controlled and limited. Besides the previous strategies that would create Himas and other protected areas, national laws or regulations should constrain the pressure of urban growth on mountain areas.

13.1.4.1 Initiative a. Include sustainable mountain tourism in school curricula

As mentioned, long-term guarantees for the sustainability of mountains in Lebanon require structural changes in the social mind-set. Education is the keyway to prepare a society for its future, both for present and future trends and challenges. This initiative will support in parallel other initiatives of this strategy, especially those linked to Himas as a social expression of interest to preserve municipal areas.

This initiative requires close coordination with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education as well as with the ministries of Environment, Agriculture, and Culture. It requires deep and intensive work to produce subjects, contents, and techniques to introduce the sustainability of the Lebanese Mountains – whether it has to do with tourism activities and developments or other

areas (agriculture, culture, traditions, etc.). Once contents are defined, the education system should promote its inclusion and coordinate with the other ministries about how to learn by doing in the field.

3.1.4.2 Initiative b. Special national regulations for tourism development at mountain areas

This initiative has two branches as fundamental concepts, but just one activity, which is to treat mountain areas as special strategic lands for Lebanon's sustainable well-being.

The final goal is ensuring the sustainability of the relationship between the ecosystem and tourism interventions in the mountains. This initiative could benefit other areas too, but the tourism industry provides a good socio-economic motive to support sustainability.

The initial focus is on creating special regulations for tourism development in the mountains. These regulations apply to any activity or development that could possibly affect the environment. These regulations are not supposed to change current ones in terms of Environmental Impact Assessments, but to complement them. On this regard, there are two proposals to work with:

- Insertion of the watershed scope for EIA: any EIA for tourism development/activity in the mountains should have a watershed scope, since underground and superficial water streams affected at the top would affect the lower areas. If water is polluted or restrained in the mountains, it will have an impact on agriculture and human consumption in the lower areas and the coast. Such special regulation should be guaranteed by law. Understanding and managing the impact on the watershed is key to ensuring a more environmentally sustainable future. Monitoring, water conservation, and stewardship projects linked to tourism, such as rainwater harvesting with new buildings or river/creek restoration for leisure or as Himas, help society to better understand and maintain a healthy watershed.

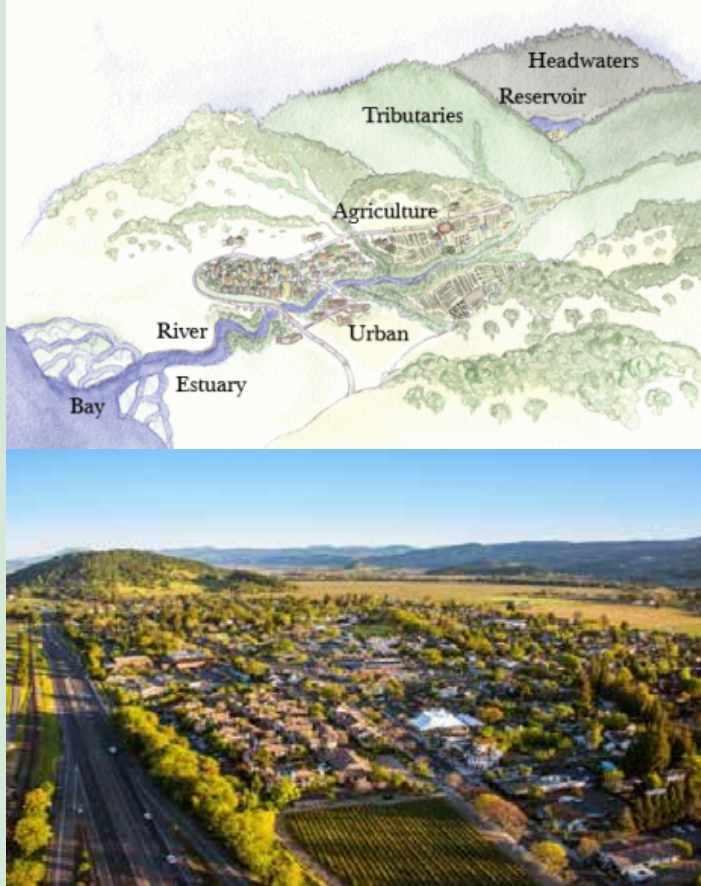
- Building pressure management: pressure of new buildings constructions in the mountains should be managed by law. This regulation should define percentage of lands that are acceptable to be built within certain horizons. Also, mitigation measures in case of land use change to recover natural features and services. Management should be different for each altitude area as expressed in Strategy 3.

- Insert tourism in land planning: tourism dynamics in Lebanon must be considered when performing general master and territorial planning and land use systems. The impacts of population movements, accommodation buildings, and activities can affect small and non-populated areas. Also, as mentioned in other strategies, landscape must be preserved to maintain tourism appeal and the well-being of local communities. If tourism is not considered at the territorial planning stage, there is the risk of generating across the board impacts – not only on the environment but also on the local society and, ultimately, on the tourism sector and businesses themselves. Thus, as part of the long-term national commitment to sustainability, tourism should be included when planning land uses and territories and should be mandated by law.

Other subjects could be considered under this initiative. The most important is to ensure sustainability for the whole society, looking for regulations that manage key components for the present and the future. If those regulations are promoted for tourism as a socio-economic activity, and if they are supported by other sectors (environment, agriculture, etc.), mountains protection could become a long-term reality.

Case: Napa Valley Slow Growth Initiative

In 1980, Napa County voters passed Slow Growth Initiative Measure A, which required that the Napa County General Plan adopt a Growth Management System that limited growth in Napa County to no more than 1% per year. This measure, which protects against sprawl and encroachment into agricultural land, is still in effect today.



Community awareness of how watershed functions is an important element of water and watershed management. [Local events and workshops](#) are a great way to learn more about watershed and what people, as watershed stewards, can do to manage and protect it.

Every other year, the community gathers at the [Napa County Watershed Symposium](#) to learn about and discuss watershed health – including the latest and best information from watershed research and monitoring, environmental restoration programs and projects, and successful management strategies to improve watershed health and function practiced around the state.

https://napavintners.com/napa_valley/environmental_leadership.asp
<https://www.napawatersheds.org/watershed-community>

13.2 Product development/experience in key assets

13.2.1 Strategy 5. Tourism Product Priorities for the Mountains of Lebanon

Goal: to optimize tourism business development in the mountains of Lebanon.

Tourism Product strategy 5 – Development of prioritized products: to focus on key tourism products that have better conditions for sustainable tourism development.

13.2.1.1 Initiative a. Development priority of tourism products

As seen in the districts' portfolio priorities, tourism products should also be supported and promoted differently to optimize what the Lebanese Mountains have to offer to their markets. Also considering a diagnostic assessment of tourism attractiveness (potential and hierarchy of tourism assets linked with each tourism product) and current tourism supply capacity (supply volume, performance, and management), a tourism products portfolio can be divided into four working categories. When dealing with tourism products, it is important not only to consider the number of assets linked to one product or another but also their current situation in terms of performance of the assets and attractions at each assessment variable. Considering both, some products can have many assets and attractions, while many or most of them can have a low average performance at each variable (e.g., religious tourism). Alternatively, some tourism products can have a relatively low number of assets and attractions, but they perform remarkably well at each variable (e.g., skiing). The portfolio is finally structured as follows:

a. Priority tourism products:

Those with greater attractiveness and better levels of supply, performance, and management. These tourism products are:

• Outstanding:

From the whole portfolio, there are three tourism products that have outstanding conditions in terms of numbers of attractions: religious, soft adventure, and historical tourism. These three have assessment

indexes that are out of scale compared to the rest of the portfolio (they are out of the first matrix because of their exceptionally high numbers).

• Rest of priority products:

Agritourism, wine tourism, architecture and ecotourism, recreation and leisure, skiing, and literature tourism. Since there are similar in terms of target markets and destinations, some products can be combined. Also, according to their current dynamics, they can act differently for tourism development in the mountains. The strategy for this group of tourism products is as follows:

—● Leverage tourism products:

○ Religious tourism:

As a leverage to attract and re-direct demand streams to other products.

○ Recreation and leisure tourism:

Like religious tourism, this open and unspecific tourism product is one of the main drivers of domestic tourism. The visitors' streams to well positioned destinations should be oriented to new destinations and products.

○ Skiing:

These destinations also attract a huge number of visitors. Ski destinations should be encouraged and promoted to develop new modalities of tourism and new experiences to diversify their offering of leisure and to spread demand streams out of the winter season. Religious and leisure tourism should act as leverages for development of new tourism modalities.

—● Diversification of tourism products:

○ Wine tourism with agritourism:

Since they belong to the same family of product they can be combined. Nevertheless, their markets differ considerably and should be developed and promoted differently. There is a wide range of potential activities and experiences to boost these modalities (culinary courses, experiential harvest, tasting seminars, etc.).

○ Cultural tourism:

This includes historic and archaeological tourism, as well as architecture and literature. Even though archaeological tourism is not performing well in general, it plays a major role in the whole country. Also, historic interests usually are aligned with archaeological sites. These two products could also be combined with architecture and, in some cases, with literature. Since all these share similar interests, target markets, and segments, they could be united under the cultural tourism group. These products should be diversified in terms of creating experiences that attract domestic visitors beyond the monuments or the history itself, creating appealing activities with storytelling.

○ Ecotourism and soft adventure:

These two products can work as one, where nature-based activities with low levels of risk are offered properly and attractively to the market. This segment should also develop some activities for hard adventurers, since it is highly specialized and still has a low number of participants. A special chapter should be dedicated to hunting since it is a widely practiced activity but with poor legal framework. This affects other types of tourism (e.g., birdwatching, ecotourism), and an uncontrolled practice negatively affects the environment (hunting any species at any time of year, affecting endangered species, migrations, biological stages, etc.). Finally, under this category should be stargazing, birdwatching, etc., with a family target approach, to create a diversity of experiences all day round.

b. Supply and management development products:

those with good attractiveness (potential and tourism hierarchy of attractions) but low current capacity or management of supply. Even though there are not products with lot of assets in this category, there are culinary experiences and specialized adventures. These two tourism products need extra support to create management frameworks (associations, events, relevant festivals, championships, as well as legal frameworks for hunting or other activities, etc.) to properly develop them, as well as to promote new businesses settlements to increase their size of supply in a sustainable manner.

c. Add attractiveness for products:

High tourism supply capacity but relatively low attractiveness. From both previous analyses (items a & b above), leisure and recreation tourism, architecture, ecotourism, and culinary are all under this category. All of them, even if they currently have supply or not, need to add value to their tourism proposals. In general, they need to enhance their quality and/or their attractiveness and should be developed with this need in mind. Even though all these tourism products are under other categories of the portfolio, their development approach should be to enhance their value and quality.

d. Opportunity development products:

In this category arts & crafts and geo-tourism are the only tourism products mentioned in this section of the portfolio. Other products such as literature, agritourism, skiing, archaeology, and hard adventure will follow the strategy assigned to other categories. Arts & crafts and geo-tourism are not considered priorities for development but as complementary tourism products to leverage the rest of the portfolio. Also, they could act as complementing activities at destinations that have other driver products. On this regard, their development will depend on the opportunity to support other strategic products or to enhance the attractiveness of districts (e.g., Aley district with arts & crafts workshops and markets).

Figure 74. Tourism Product Portfolio – Priority Matrix by Volume for Mountain Tourism in Lebanon

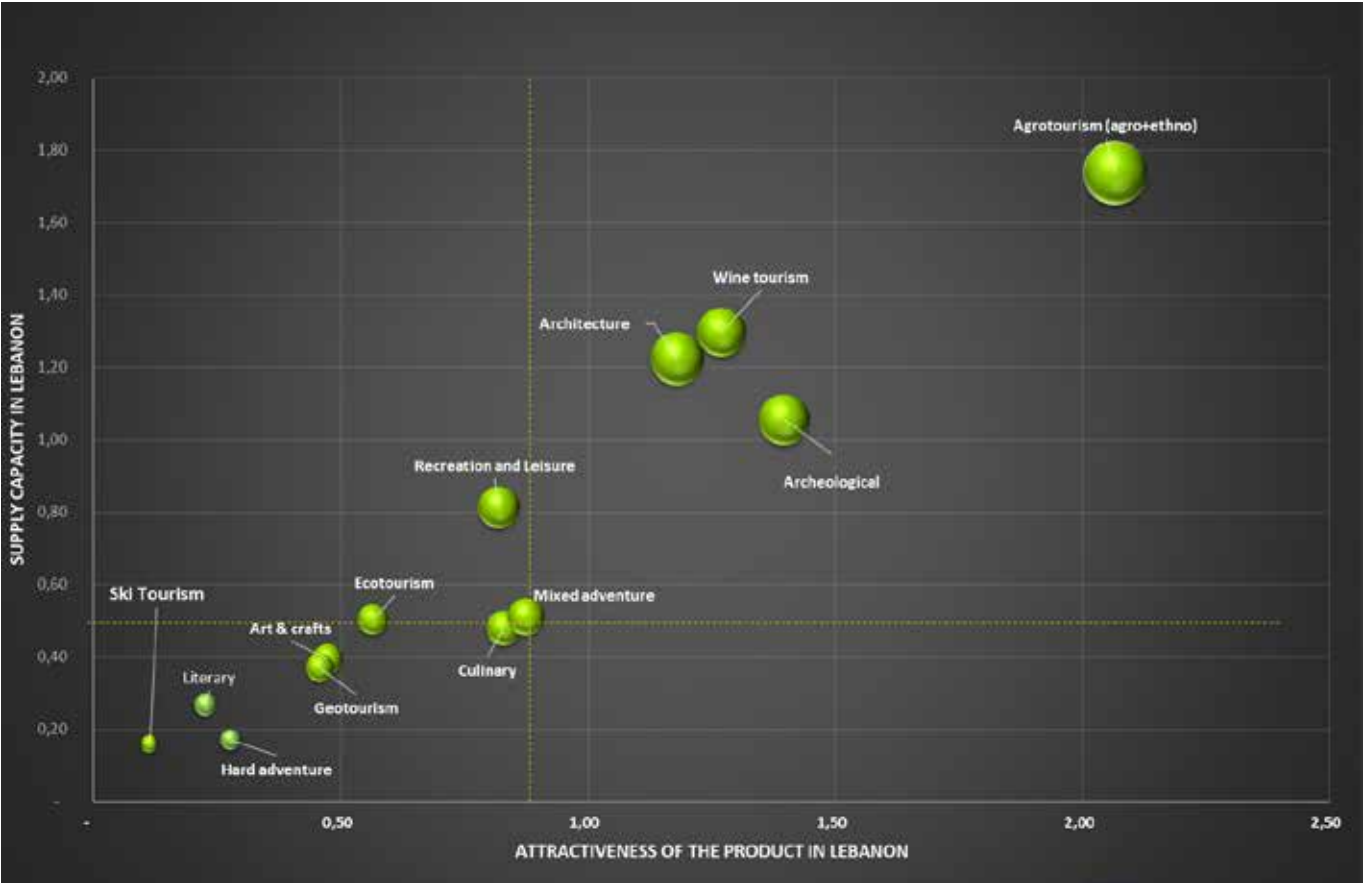
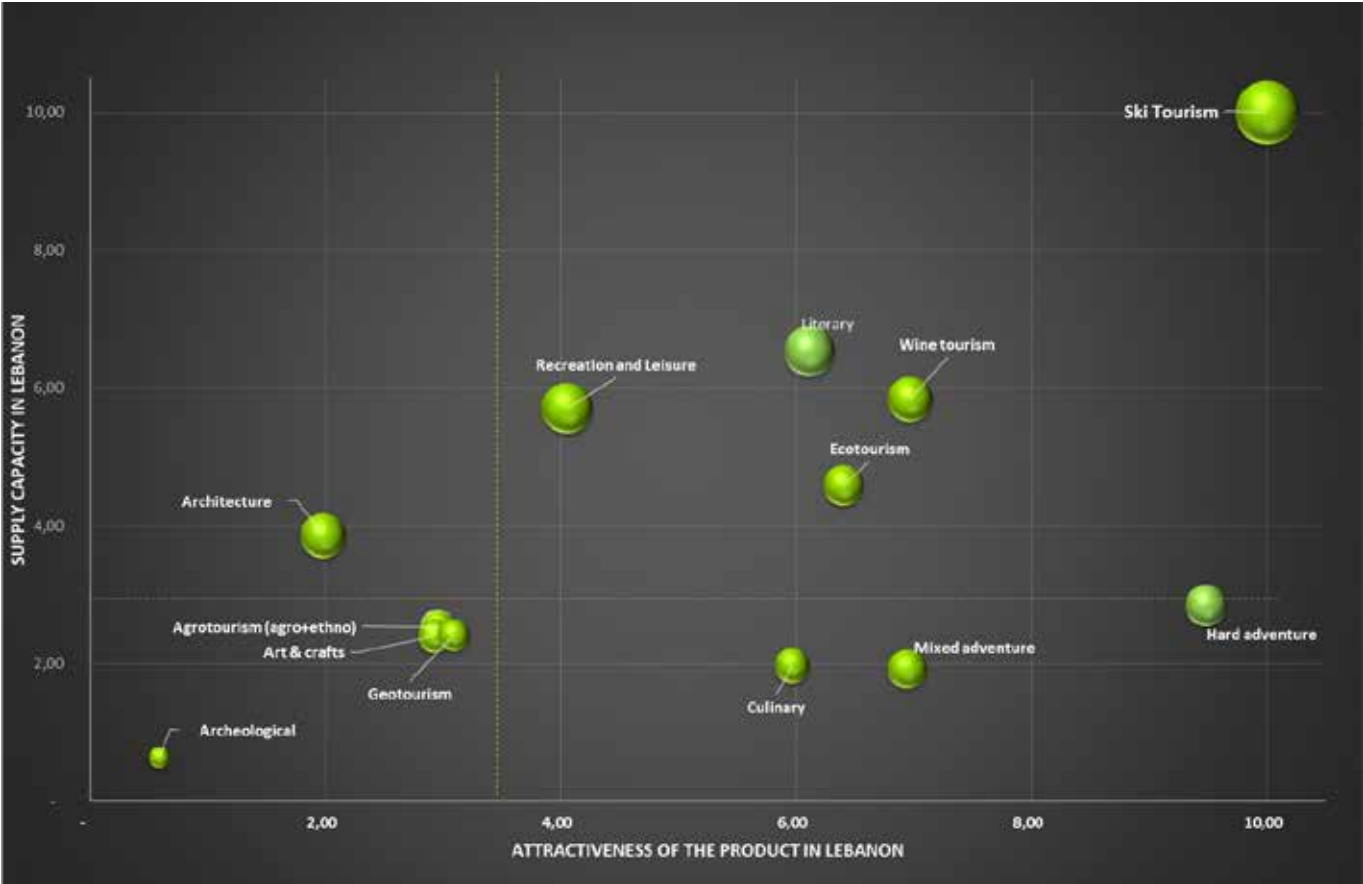


Figure 75. Tourism Product Portfolio – Priority Matrix by Current Performance for Mountain Tourism in Lebanon



13.2.1.2

Initiative b. Development of tourism products for international positioning of lebanese mountains as a tourism destination

This initiative focuses on developing and promoting certain tourism products that will act as leverages for positioning the Mountains of Lebanon as an international tourism destination. On this regard, there are the following tourism products to focus on:

a. Lebanese mountain trail:

It has been suggested that the LMT be promoted as a key tourism destination. The product strategy seeks to ensure its attractiveness by creating concepts and supporting all initiatives that consolidate the LMT network: for instance, the capacity-building of communities around the LMT, tax or fiscal benefits for linked businesses or start-ups, promotional concept development for each section of the trail to create the sense of complementarity of sections, APP insertions, trail passports (e.g., the Way of St. James), etc.

Case: The Way of St. James - Trail Credential and Compostela

The Credential is the pilgrim's passport, which must be stamped at each stage of the route. The Compostela is the document that certifies completion of the pilgrimage.



The Way of Saint James

The **pilgrim's credential** is the sort of **passport** that must be stamped at each stage of the route. Its origins date back to the Middle Ages and the document that was given to pilgrims for use as a safe-conduct. **It must be stamped at least two times a day** over the final 100 km (for pilgrims on foot or horseback) or the final 200 km (for pilgrims on bicycle), or 100 nautical miles and then walking the last few kilometers of the Camino from O Monte do Gozo (if sailing). **The only official and valid credential is issued by the Pilgrim Office.**

The passport provides access to **pilgrim hostels** and serves as **proof of the pilgrimage**, allowing the pilgrim to request the **Compostela** upon completion. It can be obtained from the

International Pilgrim Welcome Center. It is also available at the offices of pilgrim confraternities, hostels, and parish churches. It can also be requested from friends of the Way of St. James associations around the world, providing proof of identity.

To obtain the **Compostela**, it is not necessary to have completed the route over a consecutive period of time, but the journey must be geographically consecutive. This means that it is possible to follow the route on weekends, for example. However, it must always be taken up again at the previous destination, as skipping a section would invalidate the right to obtain the certificate

<https://www.caminodesantiago.gal/en/durante-el-camino/informacion-practica/la-credencial-del-peregrino>

b. Wine tourism route:

Even though Lebanon is not famous for its wines, the country's wine history and the locations of its wineries and vineyards provide an excellent framework for developing a wine tourism route. One of the best locations is the West Bekaa Valley, where around 30 to 40 wineries of all sizes and traditions are located, with iconic vineyard landscapes. On this regard, it is suggested that Lebanon assess the feasibility of applying to become a member of the Great Wine Capital of the World Network. It is also suggested to that the country participate actively and be part of all the activities of the WTO regarding wine tourism (<https://www.unwto.org/es/unwto-wine-tourism-product-development-project-joyful-journey>) as well as to participate in its Global Conferences of Wine Tourism (<https://www.unwto.org/event/5-unwto-global-conference-on-wine-tourism>).

c. Stargazing products:

Stargazing is an international tourism product. Lebanon could join all networks supporting this type of activity since it has the conditions and the strategy to do so. Besides the country's excellent conditions for stargazing, Lebanon can add value with its astronomic history, myths, and legends of the past civilizations that once occupied the country. Some star networks that could provide support are the International Dark-Sky Association (<https://www.darksky.org/>) and the Starlight Foundation.

d. Birdwatching:

Either specialized or soft birdwatching. Lebanon is one of the most important hotspots for migrant birds in the region. The country is aware of this since it has about 15 IBAs (Important Birds Areas), besides the other protected natural areas (18 natural reserves, 21 natural sites, 20 Important Plan Areas, and 26 Key Biodiversity Areas). Lebanon concentrates several bird migrations streams in the region in both migration seasons. Huge numbers of birds can be seen, including diurnal and nocturnal migrants (e.g., raptors, storks, pelicans). Palestine and Lebanon are critical stopover sites as migrants approach the desert belts from the south and the north in autumn and spring. Bird migration species provide a wide and open spectacle (especially at wetland sites) that would be appealing either for hard birdwatchers and ornithologist or occasional soft-birdwatchers and interested families. Birdwatching is a soft activity that can be practiced for everyone with little preparation and equipment. It also helps increase awareness about sustainability and the environment, and it supports landscape protection and land management. Birdwatching

is a good complement for any tourism and leisure activity, as well as sharing some elements with stargazing (e.g., a good family activity). Finally, birdwatching is also a widely spread activity among international markets, especially Anglo-Saxons (UK and USA), where the most relevant bird associations and clubs are located (Birdlife International, British Ornithologists' Club, National Audubon Society, American Birding Association, Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, among others). This tourism product needs only low investments for development: local guide training and the construction of some viewpoints and shelters. The photographic and binoculars clusters would also be enhanced and would benefit from this product. The more photographs of Lebanon's birds circulated through social networks, the better for Lebanon's reputation as a good country for birdwatching.





13.2.2 Strategy 6. Protected areas as tourism business units

Goal: to optimize tourism business opportunities while consolidating conservation of the fragile natural and cultural assets of mountains of Lebanon.

Tourism Product strategy 6 – Protected areas as tourism business units: all protected areas have a leisure purpose, either for the joy of residents or visitors. This purpose is a source of income that can benefit the area's conservation and help it to be sustainable in the long term. For that, PA tourism activities need to be managed as business units.

e. Hard adventure events:

Even though there is not a wide national market for hard adventure, recent trends have shown the rising popularity of nature-based activities such as hiking, mountain biking, etc. To position a destination as a good one for international adventure tourism, it is important to attract the market, and the market is led by its iconic brands. These brands like to discover new territories that offer new opportunities for their current markets, and destinations that could help them to enhance their business with new markets. The first step should be to organize adventure sports events, such as trail running (even though it is not currently popular among Lebanese), endurance runs, triathlon contests, etc. These events could be sponsored by iconic adventure sports brands (e.g., North Face, Columbia, Merrel, etc.). Besides the positioning effect of Lebanon as a mountain tourism destination, such events themselves generate positive benefits for hosting villages and destinations, with intensive visitation and tourism supply use.

f. Other activities:

Other activities with international projection could be caving/speleology and birdwatching (with a great market in the United States and United Kingdom).

Besides the basic balance between tourism and intensive activities within protected areas (cultural and natural) that is addressed by the PA zoning and management plan, tourism is a crucial partner of the PAs and the hosting destinations. In addition to the direct conservation benefits, tourism provides business opportunities for local communities linked directly to the PA. But all this can happen only if PA tourism activities and zones are managed as a business unit, looking for profits and income generation that will revert to the whole destination in general and to the PA in particular. This strategy has two initiatives: one to prepare the PAs to host tourism activities in a proper business manner, the other one to promote and generate added value inside the PAs, which would increase visitation, income, as well as awareness and conservation.

This strategy is aligned and supports the **Lebanon National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan 2030 (NBSAP)**, especially with Target 18: "By 2030, Lebanon has developed and is implementing a robust resource mobilization strategy with a sustainable mechanism to finance biodiversity initiatives." Under Target 18, this strategy also aligns with actions 18.2, 18.4. and 18.10.⁶

6. National Action 18.2: Study innovative sources of financing for biodiversity. National Action 18.4: Engage the private sector in resource mobilization. National Action 18.10: Conduct economic valuation studies for all nature reserves and make use of it in decision-making, seeking internal and external funding and ecotourism promotion.

13.2.2.1 Initiative a. To prepare pas to host tourism businesses

Following the NSBAP targets, and according to international good practices about combining tourism and protected areas, the initiative intends to prepare the PA's regulation framework to host tourism businesses as a leverage to finance biodiversity initiatives as well as a source of local business opportunities.

One of the objectives of each protected area is to be economically self-sustainable. On this regard, there are different means to do that when including tourism as one of the PA activities, such as:

- **Entrance fees:**

This gives the right to visit the area. It could be categorized according to the origin of visitors (e.g., free for locals, special price for nationals, regular price for foreigners, etc.).

- **Sponsoring parks:**

Sites inside the park, and/or specific venues or infrastructures (e.g., trails, signs, visitors' centers, etc.).

- **Licensing fees:**

All tourism stakeholders wishing to conduct a remunerated activity inside the park or protected area must be authorized. This authorization involves a list of compulsory requirements, including the need to be officially and legally registered as an economic unit, to pass an exam about dealing with nature inside the area, etc., and a licensing fee (annually, per semester, etc.). This license involves all

stakeholders from the tourism sector linked to the PA operation: tour guides, transport, shops, food and beverage, accommodation, etc.

- **Concession fees:**

If there is a special task or tourism service that is not a responsibility of the PA authority or if the authority does not have the necessary experience, the task or service can be subcontracted to an independent concession. This could be an accommodation service, restaurants/cafeteria, kiosks, souvenir shops, maintenance of trails and pathways, signage, management of an entire PA (i.e., a trail, shelter, viewpoint, etc.), cleaning, toilette maintenance, information center and visitors' welcome, etc. Such a concession can be operated by private companies or by local communities, always organized under a legal framework. To have the concession, the concessionaire must accomplish the same basic requirements of licensing as well as other requirements directly linked to the type of activity. The concession fee will depend on the concession model that the MoE finally defines for the PA.

A simple list (which is not intended to be compulsory nor exhaustive) of potential opportunities of concessions within protected areas is as follows. For every opportunity there is a concession model and a partner profile that better suits them:

Table. List of concessions and leasing examples within PAs

Opportunity	Concession / leasing	Partner profile
Visitors' Center management	Concession	Small - medium company / local association / medium NGO / community
Toilette management	Concession	Micro company / community / local association
Shops and souvenirs	Concession / leasing	Micro company / community / local association
Bars and restaurants	Concession / leasing	Micro company / community / local association
Kiosks	Concession / leasing	Micro company / community / local association
Distribution/internal transfers transportation	Concession	Small - medium company / local association
Trails building and management	Concession	Medium - big company / local association
Mountain climbing management (all services including reception, security, (.rescuers, etc	Concession	Medium - big company / medium - big local association / strong NGO / strong community / joint venture
Lagoon entertainment services (lounge chairs, F&B supply, tour (.guiding, etc	Concession / leasing	Small - medium company / local association / medium NGO / community
Hotel/lodge construction and management	Concession/leasing (just in case there is (already a hotel building	Medium - big company / medium - big local association / strong NGO / strong community / joint venture
Camping area management	Concession / leasing	Small - medium company / local association / medium NGO / community
Tourism zone management	Concession / leasing	Medium - big company / medium - big local association / strong NGO / strong community / joint venture
Protected area tourism management	Concession / leasing	Big company / big association / big and strong NGO / joint venture

Note: Management includes cleaning, maintenance, and service supply.

The strategy intends to prepare the legal or regulatory framework for the Lebanon PA network to host tourism activities and create income sources. Further information and frameworks are suggested in annexes.

13.2.2.2 Initiative b. To promote tourism activities inside protected and other areas

During the field visits to complete this strategy, the current situation of protected areas in terms of activities for visitors or to create market demand is relatively scarce. Although there are well organized areas, such as Chouf Biosphere Reserve and Jezzine area, the other protected areas – both new and old – lack activities to attract and maintain visitors. Thus, this initiative seeks to provide a set of tools for protected area managers (natural parks, reserves, Himas) to develop visitor activities within their areas. This initiative will also be useful for other destinations or attractions in the Lebanese Mountains, such as farms, cultural sites (e.g., Roman trails), artificial sites (Qaraoun Lake), and even private areas.

Recent tourism trends are more focused on living authentic experiences that leave people with a new perspective of life, of a destination, of what is being visited. PAs as well as other area managers might focus on creating the conditions for visitors to live those experiences. Areas should ensure that are facilitating activities to explore, experience, escape, and excel. To create these conditions, PA managers should look to develop them in-house or to outsource them and should determine if there is a need to seek outside concessions or not.

This initiative is aligned with the previous one, and it is focused on capacity-building for managers to create skills for developing activities in mountain tourism attractions.

|13.3 Tourism marketing

13.3.1 Strategy 7. Mountain tourism as a key promotional content

Goal:

To position Lebanon as the most sustainable mountain tourism destination of the Middle East, as a well preserved and unique experience of universal cultural and natural diversity, with a dynamic and appealing identity.

Tourism Marketing Strategy 7 – Mountain tourism as a key promotional content: the Lebanon Mountain Sustainable Tourism Strategy vision needs a consequent marketing promotion.

This strategy must be expressed through all the promotional channels and marketing activities of the country aligned to showcase properly the outstanding assets of the Lebanese Mountains. Also, since there is no clear positive positioning of the country due to the crises in recent years, it is an opportunity to promote a new positive image based on the country's exceptional mountain assets. This strategy should highlight the key values of encounters, religious sites, peaceful experiences, Mediterranean ancestral traditions, universal historical landscapes, culture expressions and monuments, and the very distinctive natural diversity and geographic particularities of the mountain's areas.

13.3.1.1 Initiative a. Mountain tourism marketing contents and campaigns

If the Lebanon mountains are a strategic way to position the country, all tourism contents (destinations, experiences, and products) should be clearly showcased by both online and offline promotional materials.

Mountain tourism must be considered a key component of the country's tourism marketing plans. This means that mountain destinations, experiences, and products should be included in all strategic and annual tourism promotion plans, as well as in specific campaigns.

This initiative needs, at least, the following:

- Prepare and insert mountain tourism in all national marketing plans, either in mid-term marketing plans or in annual tactical plans/campaigns.

- Prepare marketing materials. On this regard, specific products or destinations could be highlighted, such as the LMT, Chouf Biosphere Reserve, Jezzine, Ehden, a new wine tourism route, caves, etc. These materials might be best prepared emphasising their market value, as opposed to traditional tourism leaflets.

- Organize the entire online marketing ecosystem with specific content management and campaigns on mountain tourism. This online ecosystem should include, at least:

Since there is no updated tourism website about visiting Lebanon, there is the opportunity to create one with a mountain strategy in mind. It is important to mention that a tourism-oriented website is not the same as an official institutional website. Currently, the two websites are: a Tourism Website (<https://visit-lebanon.org/leisure/>) and an official institutional website (<http://mot.gov.lb/Ministry/About>). The official marketing website must be information oriented, that is, it must be a guide that allows visitors to find what they want. Websites must not have self-centered messages but rather should offer appealing messages that incentivize users to discover the various destinations.

- Social media network campaigns and community management. It is crucial to have special campaigns through the main target markets' social media, since the most effective marketing impacts come from others speaking about the destinations/country.

- Prepare and implement seasonal state of the art campaigns, each focused on providing messages of value for the target segments at each season and using the target segments' main channels and social media networks.

- Coordinate with various mountain tourism destinations and products to promote them both separately and within the whole mountain destination. This means crossed and collaborative campaigns with coming DMOs in mountain areas, as well as with tourism products such as ski resorts, the LMT, Biosphere Reserves, World Heritage sites, wine tourism routes, etc. Each of these that has a marketing platform and activity should be contacted and invited to work collaboratively at the national and local level to optimize synergies and shared positive impacts.

- Look for international synergies to promote Lebanese mountain destinations and products within international networks or events. For instance:

- The LMT and the country itself could be part of the World Trails Network (<https://worldtrailsnetwork.org/about/>), the UIAA (<https://www.theuiaa.org/>), or could collaborate with the European Mountaineers (<https://www.european-mountaineers.eu/who-we-are/>).

- The forthcoming Wine Tourism Route could be included in or work with the WTO and Great Wine Capitals.

- Stargazing could work closely with Starlight.

- Birdwatching activities/destinations could collaborate with Birdlife International (<https://www.birdlife.org/who-we-are/>) and the Audubon Society (<https://www.audubon.org/>).

- World Heritage and Biosphere Reserves should participate in their international networks' events.

- Look to attract or create international events that are linked with adventure sports, such Iron Man, trail running competitions, triathlons, etc.



Case: Online tourism marketing trends

To discover a destination through virtual reality

Virtual reality as well as augmented reality boosted by 360° videos and photogrammetry, are remarkably increasing in marketing. Companies and destinations are using them to go beyond in the users' experiences to motivate destination visits or purchases.

New segment: Elders and MAMILS

Elders are getting stronger at online trends (50 to 70 yo). This segment feels active, younger and is getting digital. The MAMILs (middle aged men in lycra) is a new sport oriented segment with specific requirements.

Programmatic

Programmatic Buying is about 2/3 of digital adds. It is the automatized purchase of digital media time slots based in target audiences instead of specific sites. The idea is to show the correct content to the right target segment.

Blockchain technology to avoid intermediary channels.

This will allow local supply to book and sell without wholesalers and travel agencies.

Chatbots y AI

Chatbots act as being a human interacting with users to solve even complex questions (<https://planetachatbot.com/chatbots-turismo/home>).

Solo traveling

Easier ways of traveling, more independent women and rise of alone parents have increase number of alone traveler, duplicating them in six years. This new segment has special needs and info that should be covered when preparing the tourism experiences and its promotion and marketing (security issues, adequate costs, alone accommodation, courses and workshops, integration with unknown people, tours for one, etc.). Transat created Solo Collection to cover all needs of solo travelers in Central America. <https://www.transat.com/en-CA/experiences/singles-vacations>

User generated content (UGC)

The User Generated Content (UGC) power is crucial, since 92% of travelers trust more in these contents than any other marketing message. This requires good wifi connectivity, social media strategies, geolocalization, rewards and "instagramming moments"

Immediate contents and videos

Immediate content only available a few hours are preferred by young segments (millenials and generation Z), as well as videos on streaming, video filters and spontaneity. Videos is about 80% of internet traffic (main platforms are YouTube, Facebook, Instagram Stories e IGTV). IGTV is a vertical video without time limits.

Fuente: <https://blog.bufferapp.com/instagram-igtv-app>

Dayketing

It is a technique that focuses contents in relevant days for target segments, which increases engagment among them, as well as positioning of the destination with added value content. It looks for avoiding doing intrusive marketing.

Pop culture for destination promotion

The increase of media coverage has strengthened the pop culture tourism. This is to travel to destinations that appear at popular literatura or cinema, movies, music or any other pop culture expressions. Ex. New Zealand with Lord of the Rings.

Voice activated assistants

Marketing channels should facilitate voice assistants searches for tourism contents, not only on mobiles but also computers, Smart whatches, tablets, Smart TVs etc. (Alexa and Expedia APP for Amazon - <https://onlim.com/en/voice-assistants-will-change-the-tourism-industry/>)

Slowtourism

It is the opposite to gentrification or overtourism. Destinations are working on APPs to manage crowded areas and to decentralize them in streaming.

Wellness and Mindfulness

This is a movement in the search of calm, inspiration and spiritual wellness. Tourism sector is looking for spiritual destinations in nature spaces, and providing new accommodation and experiences supply. Also gastronomy is esential, offering healthy, sustainable and innovative options. Usually tours blend mindfulness with courses and learning new skills.

Find your chile – UGC case: austral road



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XSUFUbZvRCY>

13.4 Management

13.4.1 Strategy 8. Consolidation of updated and sustainable legal framework

Goal:

To legally ensure tourism sustainability development and operations to help management bodies at local destinations.

Tourism Management Strategy 8 – Consolidation of updated and sustainable legal framework: this strategy focuses on providing the tourism sector with a legal framework aligned to quality and sustainability criteria, as well as supporting the previous strategies for local management at tourism destinations.

The sustainable tourism strategy for the Lebanese Mountains encourages local empowerment, engagement, and management. To support sustainability, a proper legal framework is needed. Sustainability has become a component of quality and vice-versa. This quality/sustainability component is provided by tourism supply services. Over the last ten years different trends have changed many tourism models, either affecting the accommodation businesses (Airbnb) or tour guiding (free tours or tours for tips), as well as transportation (Uber, Cabify, low-cost airlines) and bookings (wholesaling methods, global distribution systems, central reservation systems). To guarantee minimum levels for mountain tourism an updated legal framework is needed. Thus, this strategy focuses on consolidating a legal framework for sustainable tourism in the Lebanese Mountains.

13.4.1.1 Initiative A. Legal Framework Updating, Creation, and Enforcement

The Lebanese tourism legal framework is currently under revision. An updated version of the tourism law is expected to come out soon in 2022. This strategy intends to highlight the need to clearly define the roles, functions, and scope of operations of the various tourism stakeholders and activities. This legal framework should consider and define:

- **Tour operators and travel agencies:**

It should define the difference between incoming and site tour operators, outbound and inbound travel agencies, transfer agencies, etc.

- **Tour guides:**

Legal framework should define all tour guide categories, roles, and functions; scope of work;

permissions and licenses; updating processes; free services or tours for tips; legal framework; etc. (for recommendations see annexes).

- **Tourism transportation:**

Distinguish and regulate what is a public transport and tourism transport, which are the permits and requirements, drivers' profiles and training, tour guides as drivers or not, etc.

- **Accommodation:**

To expand the scope of accommodation categories that are included, and to set quality standards for ephemeral types (e.g., glamping) and new types (e.g., rural tourism accommodation, home stays, Airbnb, etc.).

- **Natural and cultural assets for tourism:**

As explained previously, protected areas and relevant assets with a certain degree of international or universal value should have specific tourism protocols and models to be managed, including the types of permissions, licensing, and concession models to be implement for investors or entrepreneurs. All tourism operations require the coordinated collaboration of the ministries of Tourism, Environment, and Culture with the Directorate General of Antiquities (DGA).

All these must be aligned with current laws that are already updated and/or that regulate such activities. The process should be to:

- All these must be aligned with current laws that are already updated and/or that regulate such activities. The process should be to:

- Identify trends that could affect different links in the tourism value chain.
- Identify current gaps in the legal framework of tourism in Lebanon.

- To work technically (with experts, tourism supply and operators, local communities, and other stakeholders when needed) to define details about regulations for tourism activities in the country.

- To insert them into the legal process to become laws, regulations, decrees, etc.

Issue and enforce them.

13.4.2 Strategy 9. Sustainable tourism management models

Goal:

To ensure tourism sustainability implementation in mountains of Lebanon.

Tourism Management Strategy 9 – Sustainable tourism management models: for the decentralization of tourism in Lebanon it is necessary to identify feasible and capable models that can ensure sustainability at all levels of the process: business development, management, and promotion.

This strategy focuses on answering the question about who is going to manage tourism development. The answer, besides the current institutional structures at the national level, comes from local levels. The best way to ensure sustainability is social empowerment at the local level. Social self-esteem derived from a community's territory and its features is the best mobilizing factor to protect the destination. The more involved the community is, the more empowered and motivated it is to act for their common welfare. Thus, the best way to guarantee sustainable tourism for their assets (cultural and natural), businesses, and community is to have local management models. Also, social empowerment within the legal framework ensures continuity over time, without being subject to political changes. Social empowerment also increases commitment and prevents corruption

linked to unwanted tourism development models. This strategy focuses on two main local management models and tools: Destination Marketing/Management Organizations and Himas. Both models help to locally manage tourism destinations, ensuring the involvement and support of key stakeholders. DMOs are suggested for managing marketing activities, promoting destinations and products, creating, and developing tourism experiences that are not yet in the destination, coordination, and leadership. Himas are suggested as a management model with a territorial scope, ensuring sustainability because of a tight community commitment. Both management models work together to protect, develop, and market protected areas and other parts of the destination with tourism activities.

13.4.2.1 Initiative a. Support and promotion of DMOs

Lebanon's Trade and Investment Facilitation (TIF), a project of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), is supporting the creation of tourism DMOs along the Lebanon Mountains. This support to each DMO is supposed to end after the first year and basically consists of technical and economic support. During this period each DMO should work to become economically self-sustainable. However, as a new concept in Lebanon, DMOs will usually require more than one year to become fully sustainable; and thus, this initiative intends to coordinate with the TIF project as well as with others working with the creation of DMOs to provide the necessary support to consolidate DMOs' minimum performance levels. Among the activities are:

- Coordination with TIF programme and other similar ones.
- Capacity-building of DMOs managers and professionals to fully understand their roles, the DMOs' potential, its possibilities to generate income, how to manage them to reach their goals, etc. This capacity-building should include technical missions to other well-established DMOs (e.g., in France, Spain, Malta) with technical internships for key professionals working in them.
- Strong coaching in the field from key well-established DMOs (the same as those visited or other partners with signed agreements for supporting Lebanese DMOs), for a period of time, in order to generate altogether the activities and products that will help Lebanese DMOs to reach their goals and their economic sustainability.
- To provide operational manuals and guidelines for DMOs to help them with their own activities.
- To provide guidelines from the national level, to be aligned with national visions and coordinated with other DMOs, either from neighbouring destinations or not, to enhance their results.
- To help them to share lessons learned, best practices, findings, and critical procedures that can improve each other's management.
- To help them work with other governmental and institutional bodies; to facilitate their negotiations, requests, applications, agreements; and coordination; and to improve the DMOs' functions and roles.

13.4.2.2 Initiative b. Support and promotion of himas and protected areas

Hima is one of the new conservation categories included in the recent Law No. 130/2019 dated 30 April 2019. A municipality, a group of municipalities, or a union of municipalities can have one or more Himas. On this regard, the Society for the Protection of Nature in Lebanon has been a key entity encouraging Himas as local land management models. This NGO strives to conserve biodiversity for the provision of a better quality of life through the Himas, as a holistic approach that embraces the four pillars of sustainable development, economic viability, environmental protection, and social equity.

Besides preparing the PAs and the Himas for tourism with legal frameworks and management tools, this initiative focuses on supporting PAs and Himas creation and management skills. Similarly, to the DMOs support, this initiative looks to provide logistic and technical support to facilitate the creation of PAs and Himas, focusing on management skills and capacity-building. Tasks to follow should include:

- Coordination among the MoE, MoA, DGA, and SPNL to define common and agreed plans of action to develop local awareness and capacities to create PAs and Himas.
- Capacity-building of local communities, municipalities, and PAs managers and professionals to understand their roles towards tourism activities, their options to generate their own incomes, how to manage them to reach their goals, etc.
- Strong coaching in the field for a period of time to generate activities and products that will help them to conduct tourism related activities, to develop PA and Hima areas, to learn tourism protocols to manage visitors inside the PAs, etc.
- Strong coaching in the field to implement products and economic components in their Pas; and for them to learn tourism dynamics, visitors' needs, potential businesses to be inside the areas and their needs, and everything that helps them to reach their economic sustainability.
- To provide operational manuals and guidelines for PAs and Himas (there are many already developed by SPNL) to help them with their own activities.
- To provide guidelines from the national level, to be aligned with national visions and coordinated with DMOs and other PAs and Himas, and to enhance their results.

- To help them to share lessons learned, best practices, findings, and critical procedures that can improve each other's management.
- To help them work with other governmental and institutional bodies to facilitate their management.

13.4.3 Strategy 10. Capacity-building for sustainable tourism in mountains

Goal:

To create the human resources capacities to implement and operate sustainable tourism in Lebanese Mountains.

Tourism Management Strategy 10 – Capacity-building for sustainable tourism in the mountains of Lebanon: Sustainable Tourism Strategy for Mountains of Lebanon needs an intensive and across the board capacity-building effort.

Along with the previous nine strategies and their initiatives, human resources of all levels and institutions need to be aligned and prepared to implement the national strategy for tourism in the Lebanese Mountains. Capacity-building is not just about technical components but also about awareness and understanding of the interrelationships of tourism with other sectors. Tourism development guidelines will come from national bodies, which they themselves need to be prepared to properly help other institutions and local entities to implement sustainable tourism activities. Local managers need support to enhance their tourism management capacities to ensure sustainable tourism implementation at their destinations. This strategy focuses on ensuring that all stakeholders of sustainable tourism development in the Lebanese Mountains are sufficiently aligned and prepared to succeed.

13.4.3.1 Initiative a. Capacity-building for implementation of the whole strategy

This initiative intends to prepare and implement capacity-building activities for all stakeholders involved. Some details and tasks to follow are:

- Identification of capacity-building needs at all institution and management levels, in the private and public sector, for sustainable mountain tourism.

- Preparation of capacity-building programmes for each target audience, with materials and contents according to their needs.
- Coordination with potential stakeholders to implement the capacity-building programmes. This includes coordination about implementation, budget, technical support, reporting, logistics, and monitoring and measure of outcomes.
- Implementation of capacity - building programmes.
- Controlling of implementation and monitoring of results.
- Adjustments of programmes, updating of subjects and contents.
- Continuous search for funding sources and budget allocation for capacity-building.

Suggested contents and target audiences:

Target audience	Subjects/Contents
MoT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness and full comprehension of the strategy and guidelines about implementation • Crossed learning with similar cases in other countries, depending on each initiative (e.g., about DMOs, Himas and PAs, tour guides, accommodation legal framework, marketing, etc.) • Focus on: DMOs, Hima, PAs • Marketing and branding: marketing online, trade marketing about mountain tourism, how to use international brands memberships (Great Wine Capitals, Starlight, World Heritage, natural and cultural brands, etc.) • Options for tourism development at PAs, legal frameworks, potential contents for education, coordination, and opportunities with other sectors, etc.
Other institutions, such as: MoE, MoA, DGA, MoE&HE, Municipalities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness about mountain tourism strategic approach involving their sectors • Awareness and capacity-building about economic opportunities for attractions under their responsibility (i.e., PAs, cultural sites, etc.) • Tourism dynamics, tourism businesses, and sustainability • Focus on: DMOs, Himas, PAs • Options to coordinate activities with MoT
Managers (DMOs, PAs, Himas, destination attractions)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness of tourism strategy for mountains • Tourism in general • Tourism management different perspectives: private and public, partnerships, DMOs, PAs, Himas, etc. • Tourism business management models for destinations: concessions, entrance fees, sponsorships, other models, etc. • Sustainability guidelines for construction, operations, tour guiding, tourism specialties and expertise, etc. • New tourism activities categories and legal frameworks (e.g., tour guides, tour operators, accommodations, etc.). • How to develop tourism products and experiences inside the assets under their responsibility (e.g., at PAs, Himas, monuments and buildings, archaeological sites, etc.)
Local entrepreneurs – private sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness of tourism strategy for mountains • Tourism dynamics in general (for new entrepreneurs) News and legal framework updates (e.g., tour guides, tour operators, accommodations, etc.). • Tourism management perspectives in place in Lebanon: private and public, partnerships, DMOs, PAs, Himas, etc. • Tourism business management models for destinations and their business opportunities for them: concessions, sponsorships, others, etc. • Sustainability laws and guidelines (for construction, operations, tour guiding, tourism specialties and expertise, etc.) • New tourism products modalities, such as soft adventure, hiking, wine tourism, rural tourism, birdwatching, stargazing, etc. • How to develop tourism products and experiences locally at all the value chain activities and taking profit of the priority destinations and products (e.g., at LMT, PAs, Himas, archaeological sites, farms, etc.) • Regular re-validation of operating licenses, especially for tour guides, tourism transport, accommodations, gastronomic business, farms, etc.

14 . STRATEGIC INITIATIVES TABLES

In the following table each strategy includes more detailed tasks for its successful implementation. Each initiative, as well, has suggested stakeholders, outcomes sought, suggested goals, and indicators to use. Finally, there is a suggested timeline. The

goals and timelines are only suggestions and will depend on the MoT's availability of resources to lead the tasks, as well as on adjustments of the goals' baselines in 2022.



Strategy	Initiatives	Activities and tasks	Suggested stakeholders	Main outcomes and indicators	Suggested timelines
1. Strategy Priority destinations for Mountain Tourism in Lebanon	Initiative A. Consolidate and boost Lebanon Mountain Trail – LMT	<p>a. Agreement of support: to meet and agree with LMT about needs and collaboration areas of support from MoT, for the short, medium, and long term. This agreement should be officially stated in an MOU.</p> <p>b. Supporting programmes: To provide support to LMT's programmes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Community development: to focus on engaging municipalities and to support local businesses and tour guiding linked to the LMT visitors. ii. Trail conservation: to support on the maintenance of different sections of LMT. iii. Education: to support the Trail to Every Classroom (TTEC) programme and the Environmental Championship Programme (ECP). iv. Marketing and promotion: to have specific marketing activities and campaigns where the LMT is the main promotional content. 	LMT, MoT, municipalities, MoE&EH, MoE, universities, local NGOs	<p>Outcome: the LMT is consolidated as a world class mountain tourism destination.</p> <p>Goals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - At least 50% of LMT is fully consolidated and supported by 2027 - Stable business initiatives along the LMT have double by 2027 - Total # of students/young engaged have multiplied for 5 by 2027 - LMT exclusive marketing campaigns concentrate the 10% of marketing budget by 2023 <p>Indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. # of municipalities involved with MOU b. # of LMT sections supported per year c. # of new business initiatives along the LMT linked to tourism, per year d. # of kms / sections maintained, per year e. # of students/young engaged in LMT education programmes, per year f. Awareness index evolution about conservation of flora and fauna, water, and pollution attitude, linked to tourism (KPI to be created) g. # of marketing campaigns including exclusively LMT, or with LMT as key offering h. Amount of marketing budget allocated for LMT campaigns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - LMT agreement, 2022 - Rest of activities according to agreement, LMT needs, and MoT supporting capacity
	Initiative B. Consider all PAs and reserves as priority destinations for mountain tourism	<p>a. To create a prioritized portfolio of PAs for tourism: to define a tourism situation baseline for each PA (nature reserves, nature sites, Himas, IBAs, IPAs, KBAs) and a priority selection set of criteria to create the portfolio of intervention for tourism.</p> <p>b. To set the tourism management protocols for PAs: these tasks must align and coordinate with those of Strategy 6. This is to prepare the prioritized PAs for tourism. Once the portfolio is clear, intervene at each PA, accordingly, following the sample process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Definition of tourism development and visiting zones ii. Definition of carrying capacities iii. Definition of visiting hours 	UNDP STEP4Nature project, MoT, UNDP, MoE, environmental NGOs, municipalities, tour operators, tourism developers	<p>Outcome: Lebanon has a highly attractive and competitive network of protected areas to enjoy and visit, providing a world class and high-quality experience.</p> <p>Goals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tourism baseline of PAs done by end of 2022 - At least 50% of key top ten prioritized PAs (all categories) have a tourism management protocol completed by 2024, and 100% by 2027. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Baseline done 2022 - Tourism protocols by 2024 and 2027 - Full tourism management and operations by 2026 and 2029

Strategy	Initiatives	Activities and tasks	Suggested stakeholders	Main outcomes and indicators	Suggested timelines
		<p>iv. Definition of visiting and tourism activities requirements</p> <p>v. Definition of business opportunities to provide services to visitors</p> <p>vi. Definition of licensing and concessions available for the PA, with impact assessments and pre-feasibility reports</p> <p>c. To develop tourism: this is to build and set all tourism facilities and services. These tasks also must align and coordinate with those of Strategy 6. This is the final stage of the process, to have the PAs fully operational for tourism:</p> <p>i. Reinforcement of PAs management to deal with tourism operations</p> <p>ii. Concessions bidding, permits and licensing issuing, purchase of materials, etc.</p> <p>iii. Construction and building of premises and infrastructure</p> <p>iv. Tour operation monitoring and controlling</p>		<p>– At least 50% of key top ten prioritized PAs (all categories) have tourism operating in them by 2026, and 100% by 2029.</p> <p>Indicators:</p> <p>a. Tourism baseline done/not done</p> <p>b. % of top ten prioritized PAs (all categories) with tourism management protocols</p> <p>c. % of top ten prioritized PAs (all categories) with full development and operations of tourism</p>	
	<p>a.</p> <p>b.</p> <p>c.</p> <p>d.</p> <p>Initiative C. Prioritized district portfolio for sustainable tourism development in mountain areas</p>	<p>a. Districts tourism planning: in coordination with interventions of the previous two initiatives (consolidation of LMT and PAS tourism development), to develop district development plans. Start from the priority districts in the short to medium term (Chouf, Keserwan, Bcharreh, Matn, Jbeil, Zgharta, Zahle, Jezzine). In the medium to long term continue with the supply & management development districts (Baalbeck, Batroun, Akkar) as well as for the attractiveness creation districts (Aley, Baabda, West Bekaa, Hasbaya). This tasks as well as the following ones must coordinate with LMT and PAS development.</p> <p>b. DMOs consolidation and creation: to provide technical support to the district tourism managers, either at creating DMOs or maintaining tourism boards. Keep the same priority pace with districts as the planning stage. This activity must be coordinated with initiative A of Strategy 9.</p> <p>c. Investment promotion for districts: to prepare investment promotion packages to attract business developers, entrepreneurs, investors, etc. To provide portfolios about tourism investment opportunities. Keep the same priority pace with districts as the planning stage.</p> <p>d. Local business support: to create business support packages to incubate start-ups or to accelerate current companies to step up to the next level (competitiveness, quality, professionalization, digitalization, etc.). Keep the same priority pace with districts as the planning stage.</p>	<p>MoT, municipalities, private tourism sector, Ministry of Economy, international and national cooperation agencies, socio-economic development NGOs</p>	<p>Outcome: Lebanon mountain tourism is developed according to an optimal sequence, boosting the socio-economic development, and enhancing local initiatives success.</p> <p>Goals:</p> <p>– All 8 priority districts have a tourism development plan and a solid DMO/Tourism board by 2024</p> <p>– All supply and management development districts as well as the attractiveness creation districts have a tourism development plan and a solid DMO/Tourism board by 2025</p> <p>– Tourism linked investments double at the 8 priority districts by 2026, and by 2027 for the rest of districts prioritized</p> <p>– Local business activities double at the 8 priority districts by 2026, and by 2027 for the rest of districts prioritized</p> <p>Indicators:</p> <p>a. District tourism plans done/not done</p> <p>b. DMO/Tourism board existence at districts</p> <p>c. Evolution of tourism linked investments per year</p> <p>d. Evolution of local business activities per year</p>	<p>Planning and DMO support: 2022–2024 for priority districts, and 2023–2025 for the rest</p> <p>Investment and business support: 2023–2026 for priority districts, and 2024–2027 for the rest</p>
Strategy 2.	Initiative A. Boost	Even though HIMA is one of the categories of Protected Areas,	MoT, SNPL,	Outcome: Lebanon mountain landscapes are	Landscape

Strategy	Initiatives	Activities and tasks	Suggested stakeholders	Main outcomes and indicators	Suggested timelines
Landscape protection for tourism	landscapes for tourism using Himas as locally owned tools	<p>There is a specific focus on this type of protection since its process is strongly community-based. This initiative is about following the HIMA creation process plus some extra activities for landscapes.</p> <p>a. Landscape identification tasks:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> To set landscapes categories and criteria for selection. To identify potential areas and landscapes to protect. To prioritize landscapes for tourism and create a portfolio of intervention. Among the priority criteria, a landscape to be within a priority district should have an extra weight for selection. <p>b. To coordinate with municipalities of the prioritized landscapes.</p> <p>c. Explanation and engaging roadshows with local communities: local communities might understand the HIMA concept and the landscape importance for them and for tourism.</p> <p>d. Creation of HIMA for landscape protection</p> <p>e. Implementation of HIMA for landscape protection</p>	<p>municipalities, local and community-based associations, NGOs, cooperation agencies</p>	<p>well preserved and representative of local identity.</p> <p>Goals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To have a landscape protection portfolio for HIMAs by 2023 At least 50% of HIMAs include explicitly the landscape protection at its core focus by 2024, and 100% of them by 2026. <p>Indicators:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Landscape portfolio for HIMAs done/not done # of HIMAs with explicit landscape protection at its core focus 	<p>Hima Portfolio: 2023</p> <p>Landscape Hima implementation starting 2023</p>
	Initiative B. Consolidate PA categories that preserve landscapes	<p>This strategy requires the following tasks:</p> <p>a. Ensure landscape protection in the law: to highlight or insert landscape protection within protected areas current categories. To enhance scope of landscape to rural and urban areas, as well as to promote the possibility of private properties protection (see example of conservation easements in Napa Valley).</p> <p>b. To follow the same process as initiative A (above), items a to e but for protected areas (besides the HIMA category).</p>	<p>MoT, MoE, MoA, municipalities, local and community-based associations, NGOs, cooperation agencies</p>	<p>Outcome: Lebanon mountain landscapes are well preserved and representative of local identity.</p> <p>Goals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To have a landscape protection category in the law by 2023/2024 To have a landscape portfolio to be protected by 2023/2024 To have at least one landscape protected area in all the priority districts by 2025, and in the rest of prioritized districts by 2027 <p>Indicators:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Landscape protection category in the law yes/no Landscape portfolio to be protected done/not done # of protected landscape areas officially declared by district 	<p>Landscape protection category by law: 2023</p> <p>Landscape portfolio: 2024</p> <p>Landscape protection implementation starting 2024</p>
	Initiative C. Sky protection	<p>a. To ensure sky protection in the law: to insert or create sky protection within protected areas current categories. To ensure sky protection involves nature, rural and urban areas.</p> <p>b. Sky protection areas identification:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> To set sky protection categories, levels, and criteria for selection. To identify potential skies to protect and areas of influence to manage. To prioritize skies for tourism and create a portfolio of intervention. Among the priority criteria, a sky landscape 	<p>International Dark-Sky Association, Starlight Foundation, MoT, MoE, MoA, Min of Infrastructure or Public Works, municipalities,</p>	<p>Outcome: Lebanon mountain landscapes are well preserved and representative of local identity.</p> <p>Goals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To have a sky protection category in the law by 2023/2024 To have a sky area portfolio to be protected by 2023-2024 To have at least one sky protected area in 	<p>Sky protection category by law: 2023</p> <p>Sky protection portfolio: 2024</p> <p>Sky protection implementation starting 2025</p>

Strategy	Initiatives	Activities and tasks	Suggested stakeholders	Main outcomes and indicators	Suggested timelines
		<p>to be within a priority district should have an extra weight for selection.</p> <p>c. To assess the impacts and requirements of protecting skies in an area of influence [in terms of air and light pollution]. Which sectors should adjust their practices (e.g., transport, industries, factories, urban areas, shopping areas, sport courts, etc.)?</p> <p>d. To coordinate with municipalities involved in prioritized skies</p> <p>e. To follow the same process as initiative A (above), items c to e but for sky protection.</p> <p>f. To apply and ask for Sky certifications: to assess the convenience and interest of each destination to certify their skies, to participate at international sky quality leagues and networks.</p>	local associations, NGOs, cooperation agencies	<p>all the priority districts/destinations by 2025, and in the rest of prioritized districts by 2027</p> <p>– To have one sky quality certified destination by 2027</p> <p>Indicators:</p> <p>a. Sky protection category and regulations in the law yes/no</p> <p>b. Sky portfolio to be protected done/not done</p> <p>c. # of protected skies officially declared by district/destination</p> <p>d. # of sky quality certified destinations</p>	Sky quality certification 2026
Strategy Tourism development following criteria	3. Initiative Geographic criteria for tourism development	<p>a. Standardization of tourism development criteria for each area: based on the suggested criteria of this strategy, to create a final development set of criteria for each area.</p> <p>b. Official policy of criteria: of those criteria as tourism policy and preparation of promoting investments and business packages for those following the criteria. This package should be aligned with Initiative C (Prioritized district portfolio for sustainable tourism development).</p> <p>c. Development criteria checklist: for tourism investment and operations permits/license issuing.</p> <p>d. Coordination with municipalities: to coordinate with municipalities to engage them to use the criteria for their tourism development.</p> <p>e. Priority implementation: to start implementing criteria check list at different areas, according to district and product priorities, and based on fragility of tourism development areas (see Strategy 3 section): area 3 is main priority; then area 4, 2, 5, and finally 1.</p>	MoT, MoT&E, private associations, municipalities, cooperation agencies	<p>Outcome: Lebanon mountain tourism is promoted and developed according to sustainable criteria.</p> <p>Goals:</p> <p>– To have the development criteria check list ready by 2023</p> <p>– All municipalities of key districts (prioritized ones) in area 3 are engaged by 2024 of area 4 and 2 by 2025, of areas 5 by 2026 and area 1 by 2027.</p> <p>Indicators:</p> <p>a. Development criteria check list ready / not ready</p> <p>b. # of municipalities engaged on following the development criteria</p> <p>c. # of investments and activities licensed and permitted following the criteria</p>	<p>Check list creation: 2022–2023</p> <p>Engagement of municipalities: 2023–2027</p> <p>Investment support: 2023 on</p>
Strategy Mountain tourism as a long-term national commitment with sustainability	4. Initiative Include sustainable mountain tourism school curricula	<p>a. Ministry of Education and Higher Education engagement: MoE&HE must be engaged on this process.</p> <p>b. To prepare sustainable tourism contents for regular education curricula: get inputs from MoE and other NGOs, MoT discuss with MoE&HE to identify opportunities to insert contents aligned with education purposes; preparation of contents to insert.</p> <p>c. Progressive insertion: of sustainable tourism contents into regular curricula and lectured at schools. Support to other NGOs that already have education programmes, even if they are not for regular curricula (e.g., LMT Education Programme and SPNL SNOW-School with No Walls Programme)</p>	MoT, MoE&HE, SPNL, NGOs, MoE, LMT, other	<p>Outcome: Lebanon society is socially committed with sustainable tourism development.</p> <p>Goals:</p> <p>– To have MoE&HE on board by the end of 2022</p> <p>– To have sustainable tourism approved contents for regular education by 2023</p> <p>– At least 25% of schools of priority districts lecturing sustainable tourism contents by 2024, 50% by 2025, 100% by 2026.</p> <p>Indicators:</p>	<p>Engagement of Min of Education: 2022</p> <p>Content preparation: 2022 and 2023</p> <p>Implementation at key districts' schools: from 2024 on</p>

Strategy	Initiatives	Activities and tasks	Suggested stakeholders	Main outcomes and indicators	Suggested timelines
5. Tourism product priorities for mountains of Lebanon	Initiative B. Special national regulations for tourism development at Mountain Areas	<p>a. To create a sustainable tourism national forum for regulations: this forum should be made with different stakeholders' participation, either from private or public sectors, as well as NGOs and cooperation agencies.</p> <p>b. To identify sustainable tourism regulation gaps and needs: based on the forum discussions. Special focus on the 'two subjects' proposed in this strategy: watershed scope for EIAs of tourism development; tourism building pressure management.</p> <p>c. To prepare sustainable tourism regulations: preparation of regulations technically and legally.</p> <p>d. To settle regulation approval procedures: to ease and implement approval procedures for sustainable tourism regulations. To present and approve regulations following legal procedures.</p> <p>e. Implementation</p>	MoT, MoE, municipalities, cooperation agencies, NGOs, Parliament deputies	<p>a. Mo&EH on board / not on board</p> <p>b. Sustainable tourism approved contents yes/no</p> <p>c. % of schools lecturing sustainable tourism contents per districts</p> <p>Outcome: Lebanon tourism development legal framework has a comprehensive sustainability approach.</p> <p>Goals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To have a sustainable tourism forum created by 2023. - To have sustainable tourism regulations approval procedures in place by 2023. - To start sustainable tourism legal framework enhancement by 2024 and on. <p>Indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Sustainable tourism forum created / not created b. Sustainable tourism regulations approval procedures in place/not in place c. #of sustainable tourism regulation creation/improvement per year 	Forum and procedures: 2022-2023 Implementation of activities: 2024 on
		<p>a. Tourism products planning: in coordination with interventions on destinations (priority ones and PAs), to develop tourism product national business development plans. Tourism product plans should have the following approach for each one:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Leverage products – priority: religious, leisure and ski. ii. Diversification products– priority: wine tourism, agritourism, cultural tourism, ecotourism, and soft adventure. iii. Develop supply and management: culinary and specialized adventures (hard adventure tourism). iv. Develop attractiveness: ecotourism, architecture and literature tourism, leisure and culinary (this one also needs supply development). <p>Time schedule:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> v. Start from the priority products in the short to medium term: Historical, cultural, and religious tourism; Soft Adventure. vi. Medium to long term products: wine and agritourism; culinary; specialized adventure tourism; ecotourism; leisure (improvement and diversification of experiences). <p>b. Investment promotion for tourism products: to prepare investment promotion packages to attract business developers, entrepreneurs, investors, etc. to invest in selected and prioritized products. To provide portfolios about tourism</p>	MoT, MoA, DGA, different beliefs authorities, private tourism companies and associations, municipalities, Mo&T, cooperation agencies	<p>Outcome: Lebanon mountain tourism products are developed according to optimal paces and conditions for success.</p> <p>Goals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The 4 short to medium term products have a business plan in 2023; and the rest in 2025 - The 4 short to medium term products have an investment promotion and a business support package in 2024; and the rest in 2026 - #of supported companies double by 2026 (baseline to be defined) <p>Indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. # of tourism products with business plans b. # of tourism products with investment packages c. # of tourism products with business support packages d. # of companies supported by product e. Volume of investment per each product 	<p>Planning: 2022/2025</p> <p>Promotion and support packages: 2023-2026</p> <p>Implementation of support: 2023 on</p>

Strategy	Initiatives	Activities and tasks	Suggested stakeholders	Main outcomes and indicators	Suggested timelines
		<p>investment opportunities. This keeps the same priority pace with products planning stages.</p> <p>c. Local business support: to create business support packages to incubate start-ups or to accelerate current companies to step up to the next level (competitiveness, quality, professionalization, digitalization, etc.). This support will be linked to the initiatives and business that follow the strategy criteria (of focus, approach, and timing). Keep the same priority pace as the planning stages.</p>			
	Initiative B. Development of tourism products for international positioning	<p>Focused development of the following international tourism products:</p> <p>a. LMT: aligned with initiative A of strategy 1, Consolidate and boost Lebanon Mountain Trail (LMT). Special focus on reinforcing the community development programme and the marketing and promotion activities. Potentially, depending on the LMT needs, to plan a secondary or complementary trail network for Lebanon, linked to LMT but independent.</p> <p>b. Wine Tourism Route:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> To define and plan the wine tourism route business development. To create business support packages to incubate start-ups or to accelerate current companies linked to wine tourism, to step up to the next level (competitiveness, quality, professionalization, digitalization, etc.). To promote and implement the support services. To assess possible application to join the Great Wine Capitals network. <p>c. Stargazing:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> To define and plan the stargazing destinations in Lebanon, in coordination with the sky protection areas. To define and create the stargazing destination network and business development plan. To create business support packages to incubate start-ups or to accelerate current companies linked to stargazing tourism. To promote and implement the support services. To coordinate with the sky protected areas managers to assess about dark skies or starlight certifications for products, destinations, areas. <p>d. Hard adventure events:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> To define and plan the hard adventure events to hosts in Lebanon, in coordination with specialized associations and mountain technical supplies companies. Locations should always be aligned with district strategies. To develop the hard adventure events calendar per year. 	<p>MoT, LMT, wine producers' companies and associations, Great Wine Capitals Network, WTO, IDA, Starlight Foundation, mountain gear specialized brands, cooperation agencies</p>	<p>Outcome: Lebanon mountain tourism is international known because of the LMT, its wine tourism route experience, the stargazing experiences, and the hard adventure events.</p> <p>Goals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> At least 50% of LMT is fully consolidated and supported by 2027 Stable business initiatives along the LMT have double by 2027 LMT exclusive marketing campaigns concentrate the 10% of marketing budget by 2023 The Wine Tourism Route is defined and planned by 2023 The number of wineries open to visitors reaches the 50% of all wineries by 2024, 75% by 2026. The Wine Tourism Route increase visitors' numbers and expenses in a 20% pace (compound annual growth rate) every year until 2029. At least 5 destinations for stargazing are operative by 2023. At least 15 companies and initiatives supply stargazing experiences by 2024. There are at least 2 hard-adventure events in 2024, 4 in 2025, and 8 in 2026. <p>Indicators:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> # of LMT sections supported per year # of new business initiatives along the LMT linked to tourism, per year # of marketing campaigns including exclusively LMT, or with LMT as key offering Wine Tourism Route established yes/no 	<p>Planning: 2022–2025</p> <p>Operations: 2023 on</p>

Strategy	Initiatives	Activities and tasks	Suggested stakeholders	Main outcomes and indicators	Suggested timelines
Strategy 6. Protected areas (PAs) as tourism business units		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> iii. To create business support packages to attract event producer companies, big event sponsors and to incubate local start-ups or to accelerate local companies to provide services for adventure and sports events. iv. To promote events among event producer companies and implement the local support services. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> e. # of wineries opened for visits f. # of visitors to wineries g. # of destinations for stargazing h. # of companies operating stargazing i. # of hard-adventure international events 	
	Initiative A. To prepare PAs to host tourism businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Coordination with stakeholders: mainly with MoE and municipalities to identify which PAs can develop and offer tourism businesses b. Legal and regulatory framework preparation: definition of tourism business and income sources settlement at PAs. Assessment of income sources models for PAs: entrance fees, sponsoring incomes, licensing fees, concession fees. Legal framework development to support the models to be implemented. c. Enactment of legal framework: for tourism activities at PAs 	<p>MoT, MoE, SNPL, NGOs, cooperation agencies, tourism private sector, law & regulation makers</p>	<p>Outcome: Lebanon has one of the most advance and self-sustainable protected areas networks in the region.</p> <p>Goals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To have the tourism business operation model for PAs by the end of 2022. - To have a legal and regulations framework for the tourism operation model for PAs by end of 2023. - To have at least 50% of PAs that receive visitors with tourism operations model implemented by end of 2024, and 100% by 2026. <p>Indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Tourism Business Operation (TBO) model done / not done b. Legal framework for TBO model done/not done 	<p>Model for PAs development: 2022</p> <p>Legal framework ready: 2023</p> <p>Enactment: 2024</p>
	Initiative B. To promote tourism activities inside protected areas and others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Guidelines creation for managers: tools development for income sources models at PAs, preparation of guidelines for managers. b. Capacity-building for PAs managers: to implement the income sources models suitable for each PA with tourism opportunities. c. Development and implementation of tourism activities at PAs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. To create tourism products, services, activities, and experiences for each PA with tourism. ii. To provide coaching and support for PAs managers to implement activities and income models. iii. To provide commercialization support to get the PAs experiences and activities in the market. Such as campaigns, special seasonal activities, regular services vs special events, trade, and digital channels, etc. 	<p>MoT, MoE, SNPL, NGOs, cooperation agencies, tourism private sector</p>	<p>Outcome: Lebanon has one of the most educating, entertaining, and attractive protected areas networks in the region.</p> <p>Goals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Guidelines for managers done by the end of 2022 - At least 50% of PAs that receive visitors with managers engaged, trained, and supported by end of 2024, and 100% by 2026. - To have at least 75% of PAs that receive visitors with regular tourism activities available all year round by end of 2024, and 100% by 2025. <p>Indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Guidelines for PAs managers done / not done b. % of PAs receiving visitors with managers 	<p>Guidelines: 2022</p> <p>Engagement and training: 2024 on</p> <p>Activities development: 2023 on</p>

Strategy	Initiatives	Activities and tasks	Suggested stakeholders	Main outcomes and indicators	Suggested timelines
				engaged and trained c. # of PAs receiving visitors with all year round regular activities implemented	
Strategy 7. Mountain tourism as a key promotional content	7. Initiative Mountain Tourism marketing contents and campaigns	<p>a. Prepare and insert mountain tourism of Lebanon in all national marketing plans: either mid-term marketing plans or annual tactical plans/campaigns.</p> <p>b. Prepare marketing material: for promoting mountain tourism in Lebanon. Specific products or destinations could be highlighted, such as LMT, Chouf Biosphere Reserve, Jezzine, Ehden, a new wine tourism route, caves, stargazing tours, etc. This material might be prepared wisely in terms of making it of value for markets and not a classical leaflet.</p> <p>c. Online marketing ecosystem: to organize the whole online marketing ecosystem with specific content management and campaigns with mountain tourism contents. It should include an updated tourism website about visiting Lebanon, and social media networks campaigns and community management.</p> <p>d. Seasonal state of the art campaigns: focused on providing messages of value for the target segments at each season, and using the target segments' main channels and social media networks</p> <p>e. Marketing coordination: this means to coordinate with different mountain tourism destinations and products in a coordination forum. It intends to promote them as single subjects or within the whole mountain destination strategy. This means crossed and collaborative campaigns with coming DMOs, as well as with tourism products such as ski resorts, LMT, Biosphere Reserves, World Heritage sites, wine tourism routes, etc. This is to optimize synergies and crossed positive impacts</p> <p>f. International alliances: look for international synergies to promote Lebanese mountain destinations and products within international networks or events. For instance:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> LMT with World Trails Network, UIAA, EUMA. UNWTO and Great Wine Capitals for wine routes. Starlight and IDA Birallife International, Audubon Society World Heritage and Biosphere Reserves for events International hard-adventure events (Iron Man, trail running, others). 	<p>MoT, municipalities, tourism boards (or DMOs), tourism private sector, LMT, WTO, IDA, cooperation agencies, others</p>	<p>Outcome: Lebanon is positioned as the most sustainable tourism mountain destination of Middle East, well preserved and unique experience of universal culture and nature diversity, with dynamic and appealing identity.</p> <p>Goals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mountain tourism contents are included as 50% of content of tourism marketing campaigns of Lebanon by 2023. Online marketing ecosystem is ready and well positioned in key markets by end of 2022. There are mountain tourism seasonal campaigns planned and implemented from 2023 and on. There is a marketing coordination forum in place by the end of 2022. International alliances are in place from the end of 2022 and on. Lebanon tourism positioning assessment on key markets (baseline and goal to be define) <p>Indicators:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Online marketing ecosystem operative / not operative Analytics evolution of online ecosystem Campaign impact results in visitors' number, overnights, length of stay and tourism spending. # of international alliances done 	<p>Planning and tools preparation, marketing coordination forum, and alliances: 2022-early 2023.</p> <p>Campaigns implementation: 2023 on</p> <p>Positioning assessments: every year</p>
Strategy 8. Consolidation of updated content and	Initiative A. Legal framework updating, creation and	This strategy focuses on updating and re-enforcing operative tourism sector legal framework. This focuses on tour operators and travel agencies, tour guides, tourism transport, accommodation, natural and cultural asset management for tourism. Tasks:	MoT, private tourism sector, Parliament or law makers,	<p>Outcome: sustainable tourism in Lebanon is updated and legally guaranteed.</p> <p>Goals:</p>	Legal commission: 2022

Strategy	Initiatives	Activities and tasks	Suggested stakeholders	Main outcomes and indicators	Suggested timelines
sustainable legal framework	enforcement	<p>a. Tourism legal updating commission: it should be created and will be in charge of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Trends observatory: this is to have a monitoring system to identify trends that could affect different chains for the tourism value chain (e.g., collaborative services, business model changes such as free tours, tourism within PAs, etc.). ii. Legal framework gaps: to identify current gaps at the legal framework of tourism in Lebanon. iii. Technical development of legal tools for tourism: to work technically (with experts, tourism supply and operators, local communities and other stakeholders when needed) to define details about regulations for tourism activities in the country. iv. Issuing and enforcement: to insert them into the legal process to become laws, regulations, decrees, etc. <p>b. Auditing and controlling: to settle and implement the monitoring procedures to enforce laws and regulations.</p>	<p>municipalities, protected areas, DGA, cooperation agencies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lebanon has a tourism legal updating commission in place by the end of 2022. - Tour operators, travel agencies, tour guides, accommodation and transport regulations are operative by 2023. - Natural and cultural asset management for tourism regulations are operative by 2023/2024 (aligned with Strategy 6, initiatives A and B). - % of officially registered operators increases year by year (baseline and goal to be defined) <p>Indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Tourism legal commission operative / not operative b. Tourism linked regulations updated and operative / not updated – operative c. # of tourism operators (all type of activities) officially registered and licensed 	<p>Regulations updates and creation: 2023 on</p>
Strategy Sustainable tourism management models	9. Initiative Support and promotion of DMOs	<p>a. Coordination for DMOs: with USAID-TIF Program and other similar ones supporting DMOs implementation. Definition of coordinated supporting plan.</p> <p>b. Capacity-building to DMOs: for managers and professionals, to fully understand their roles, the DMOs potential, its possibilities to generate own incomes, how to manage them to reach their goals, etc. This capacity-building could be with technical missions to other well established DMOs (in France, Spain, Malta) and technical stages of key professionals in them.</p> <p>c. Coaching: strong coaching in the field from key well established DMOs (the same visited or other partners with signed agreements for supporting Lebanese DMOs), for a certain period, to generate altogether the activities and products that will help Lebanese DMOs to reach their goals and their economic sustainability.</p> <p>d. Operational support: to help them work with other governmental and institutional bodies, to facilitate their negotiations, requests, applications, agreements, and coordination, to improve the DMOs' functions and roles.</p> <p>e. Guideline and tools: to provide operational manuals and guidelines for DMOs to help them with their own activities. To provide guidelines from the national levels, to be aligned with national visions and coordinated with other DMOs, either from neighbouring destinations or not, to enhance their results.</p> <p>f. Sharing knowledge: to help them sharing lessons learnt, best practices, findings and critical procedures that can improve</p>	<p>MoT, USAID, UNDP, municipalities, private tourism sector, other NGOs, cooperation agencies</p>	<p>Outcome: tourism management in the Lebanon Mountains is professional and guarantees sustainability.</p> <p>Goals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Coordinated supporting plan and guidelines are ready by mid-2022 - At least 30 DMO managers and leaders have been trained by 2023, and 30 more every 2 years - At least 75% of operative DMOs receive coaching and operational support by 2023 - There is a DMO national seminar every year, from 2022 and on <p>Indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Coordinated supporting plan operative / not operative b. # of DMOs' managers trained c. # of DMOs coached d. Guidelines done / not done e. Knowledge sharing platform operative / not operative 	<p>Coordination: 2022</p> <p>Training: 2022 on</p> <p>Coaching: 2023 on</p> <p>Sharing knowledge: 2022 on</p>

Strategy	Initiatives	Activities and tasks	Suggested stakeholders	Main outcomes and indicators	Suggested timelines
		each other management. This could be done through annual DMOs national meetings. Also, through an online network (with resources, news, newsletters, information, etc.).			
	B. Support and promotion of Himas and protected areas (PAs)	<p>a. Coordination for HIMAs: coordination with MoE, MoA, DGA, and SPNL to define common and agreed plans of action to develop local awareness and capacities to create PAs and Himas.</p> <p>b. Capacity-building: capacity-building to local communities, municipalities, PAs managers and professionals, to understand their roles towards tourism activities, and their options to generate own incomes, how to manage them to reach their goals, etc.</p> <p>c. Coaching: strong coaching in the field for a period, to generate activities and products that will help them doing tourism related activities, development of PAs and Himas, tourism protocols to manage visitors inside the PAs, etc. Also, to implement products and economic components in their PAs, for them to learn tourism dynamics, visitors' needs, potential business to be inside the areas and their needs, and everything that helps them reaching their economic sustainability.</p> <p>d. Operational support: to help them work with other governmental and institutional bodies, to facilitate their management.</p> <p>e. Guidelines and tools: to provide operational manuals and guidelines for PAs and Himas (for these ones there are many already developed by SPNL) to help them with their own activities. To provide guidelines from the national levels, to be aligned with national visions and coordinated with DMOs, other PAs and Himas, to enhance their results.</p> <p>f. Sharing knowledge: to help them sharing lessons learnt, best practices, findings and critical procedures that can improve each other management. This could be done through annual HIMAs national meetings. Also, through an online network (with resources, news, newsletters, information, etc.).</p>	<p>MoT, MoA, SPNL, other cooperation agencies</p> <p>MoE, DGA, UNDP, NGOs, cooperation agencies</p>	<p>Outcome: tourism management in HIMAs and PAs of Lebanon is professional and guarantees sustainability.</p> <p>Goals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Coordinated supporting plan and guidelines are ready by mid-2022 - At least 45 HIMA managers and leaders have been trained by 2023, and 45 more every 2 years - At least 75% of operative HIMAs for tourism receive coaching and operational support by 2023 - There is a HIMA national seminar every year, from 2022 on <p>Indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Coordinated supporting plan operative / not operative b. # of HIMAs' managers trained c. # of HIMAs coached d. Guidelines done / not done e. Knowledge sharing platform operative / not operative 	<p>Coordination: 2022</p> <p>Training: 2022 on</p> <p>Coaching: 2023 on</p> <p>Sharing knowledge: 2022 on</p>
10. Strategy Capacity building sustainable tourism mountains	Initiative Capacity building implementation of the whole strategy	<p>a. Identification of capacity-building needs: at all institutions and management levels, in the private and public sector, for sustainable tourism development in mountains of Lebanon.</p> <p>b. Preparation of capacity-building programmes: for each target audience, with materials and contents according to their needs.</p> <p>c. Coordination: with potential stakeholders to implement the capacity-building programmes. Coordination about implementation, budget, technical support, reporting, logistics.</p>	<p>MoT, NGOs, Universities and training institutions, cooperation agencies, all stakeholders involved as beneficiaries</p>	<p>Outcome: sustainable tourism in the Lebanon mountains is professionally managed, and social and governmental institutions are widely committed and aware of its relevance for the country.</p> <p>Goals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Coordinated capacity-building programme for sustainable mountain 	<p>Program preparation and business planning: 2022</p> <p>Implementation, controlling and adjustment: 2023 on</p>

Strategy	Initiatives	Activities and tasks	Suggested stakeholders	Main outcomes and indicators	Suggested timelines
		<p>monitoring, and measure of outcomes.</p> <p>d. Implementation: of capacity-building programmes.</p> <p>e. Controlling: of implementation and monitoring of results.</p> <p>f. Adjustments: of programmes, updating of subjects and contents.</p> <p>g. Funding sources search: continuous search for funding sources and budget allocation for capacity-building, There is the need of a business plan to ensure income generation consistently.</p>		<p>tourism is ready by the end of 2022.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All government institutions' key managers and staff have received training by the end of 2023, and refreshment training every 4 years. - 300 participants / stakeholders have been trained by 2023, and 200 every year on. - The capacity-building programme is economically self-sustainable by 2024 <p>Indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Capacity-building programme operative/not operative b. # of key managers from stakeholder governmental institution trained c. # of trainees of the programme d. Economic health of the programme 	

15 . ANNEXES

15.1 Annex1. Comments and suggestions about tour guides legal framework

At the time of this consultancy, the Lebanon tour guides regulation framework was undergoing a revision. Currently, there are conflicts regarding scopes of actions, what is allowed and not, who can have a tour guide license or not, requirements, application procedures, etc. There are some reluctances on the part of the Tour Guides Association about various items and not always homogenous opinions. In some cases, entrance barriers want to be raised, and in others the stakeholders want to reduce them according to their own interests. However, most important is that the entire tourism sector, both public and private, is concerned about having the tour guiding quality that Lebanon deserves.

After speaking and debating with different stakeholders from a wide variety of profiles (local destination managers, tour guides, tour guides associations, culture assets, nature assets, tour operators, national Ministry of Tourism, NGOs, and cooperation agencies), the following is a suggested proposal for a new Tour Guides framework in Lebanon. It is delivered with the aim of being useful to the tourism sector, with no intention to diminish any opinion or position about tour guides, and only with the goal of improving the level of tour guiding professionalism. Ultimately, it is the Ministry of Tourism that must develop the tour guides regulations to be implemented in Lebanon.

The proposal is as follows:

- a. Currently, there are two different types of official licenses for professional tour guides: General License and Specialized License. Let's call them License Type A and License Type B, respectively.
- b. The General License has a territorial scope, and the Specialized License has an expertise or technical skills scope.

General tour guide license – license type a

A. Scope of work:

A specialized license can be for different specialties, depending on a list of specialized activities as defined by the tourism sector and the MoT. This means that the general tour guide who wants to get the specialized license will have it, but just for a specific activity. A License Type B of some specialty does not allow the tour guide to lead other specialties. Licenses Type B are in specific scope, focused on either sites or activities. The following set of specializations is suggested:

- a. Cultural tour guide: licensed to work at all cultural assets under the DGA scope of work, public museums, traditional festivals, etc.
- b. Nature tour guides: licensed to work at all protected areas (including Himas) available for tourism under the Ministry of Environment and Ministry of Agriculture.
- c. Mountain adventure tour guides: licensed to work with adventure tourism activities along the Lebanese Mountains, including trekking, hiking, climbing, etc.
- d. Other specialties requiring a specific license: diving, paragliding, ski diving, hot air ballooning, wine tourism, ecotourism, stargazing, speleology, etc.

B. Requirements to apply for any speciality license:

- a. Must have a License Type A. This ensures the basic requirements and knowledge according to the territorial scope of that license.
- b. Knowledge: must demonstrate technical knowledge about the specialization to which he/she is applying.
- c. Means of assessment of special technical knowledge:
 - i. to demonstrate amateur practice of the activity for more than two years or an intensive apprenticeship period (the period length would depend on the specialty applied).
 - ii. to have a technical skill diploma about the

specialty whenever is possible, depending on the specialty (e.g., dive master diploma, national association trainings, DGA or MoE diploma, etc.).

iii. to pass an official institution's test of the specific specialization, in two modalities: theory and practice.

C. Capacity/skills required at work:

- a. Specific technical skills required, according to the specialization license applied.
- b. Specific and in-depth knowledge of the specialization.
- c. Logistic and security procedures: the tour guide must know all the logistic and security procedures and the group management of the site or activity (e.g., emergency contact details, international protocols, etc.). This also includes potential international penalties that a visitor could incur due to bad behaviour (e.g., damage to heritage assets, illegal trading in flora and/or fauna, etc.).

D. Official license issuing:

- a. All Type B licenses will be issued by the Ministry of Tourism in coordination with specialized institutions according to the specialty applied.
- b. Potential official institutions that could co-issue the licenses include:
 - i. Culture tour guide: DGA
 - ii. Nature tour guide: Ministry of Environment
 - iii. Mountain tour guide: LMT, Ministry of Sports

E. Revalidation of license: all specialty licensed tour guides, to continue to work legally, must:

- a. Have a valid (or revalidated) License Type A as a General Tour Guide (national or local).
- b. Revalidate License Type B every four years. Specializations must be updated regularly since there are changes in cultural and/or natural situations, new discoveries or research findings, legal framework changes, new technology affecting the activity, etc.
- c. Pass an official institution's test/exam of the specialty.
- d. Pay the annual license fee.

F. Constraints of work:

- a. No specialized tour guides (either national or local) can guide tours of a different specialization other than his/her own.
- b. No specialized tour guide can guide tours if he/she has not a valid official License Type A (either national or local).

G. Possibilities:

- a. Either a National or a Local Tour Guide can apply for a specialized license.
- a. A specialized tour guide could be just local.
- a. A person can be both a national and local tour guide, and have a specialty license, all at the same time.

The figure of the host person

This figure is mentioned here not to be considered as another category or classification of tour guides, but to specifically identify the role of the Host person in tourism development. If the role of the Host figure is clear, there will be no confusion with tour guides. The Host figure is very important to accomplish the sustainable tourism mission of including and involving local people. Quite often, local people do not have the means or the capacity to become involved in tourism activities as official guides, despite their willingness to do so. Thus, officialising the Host figure should help to understand the differences among various tour guides, and their complementarity to add value to the whole tour and visitor experience.

- The Host is not an officially licensed tour guide, and thus he/she cannot work as such at any territorial level or specialty.
- A Host is a person who, because of his/her specific profile, has something of added value for the visitor experience. They add value to the visitor's experience because of some specific mastery, a traditional profession, artisanal knowledge, personal history, personal feature, or character, etc. Such individuals include, for instance, wise elders in traditional towns, storytellers, traditional cooks, fishermen, farmers, arts & craft workers, teachers, local community characters, etc.
- They have no requirements in terms of regular academic education level (i.e., they can be illiterate), language speaking level, or technical skills other than those of their profile or character.

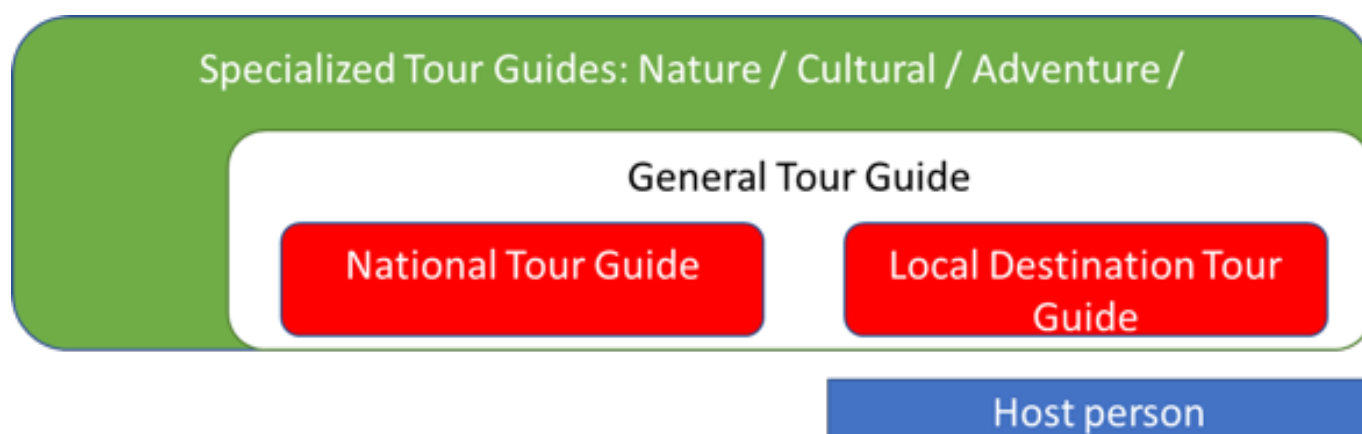
- They only can work in a specific place of their expertise or character and cannot act as tour guides in a destination (unless they are licensed as such, off course).
- They cannot work or receive tourists/visitors to conduct a tour, itinerary, or specialized service (or site) without an official tour guide (either national or local, and specialized if the activity requires it). They must complete the tour (service) together with the guide, according to the tour features and needs.
- They can be contacted and hired by tour

operators and tour guides as service providers.

- They have no technical responsibility for groups of visitors, since they just accompany official tour guides and tour operators.
- A Host, if he/she wants to and successfully completes all the requirements, can apply to become an official tour guide, and be licensed.

	General Tour Guides	Specialized Tour Guides
Type of license	License A	License B
Level of mandatory to work as tour guide	Compulsory	Compulsory according to specialization of tours or activity
Scope of work	Territorial focus	Specialization focus
	Nation-wide / Destination-wide	Depends on specialty
Allows to work in	All country / Local destination	Specific sites or specific activity
Requirements	Secondary school Technical diploma about tour guiding Official exam / test (theory and practice) Annual license fee	- To have a License A operative - Technical knowledge - Technical official exam about specialty - Annual license fee of the specialty
Licensed issued by	MoT / MoT-DMO	MoT + Specialty representative institution
Revalidation of licensed	Yes, every 12 years	- Yes, every 4 years - The License A must be valid
Constrains of work	Cannot work as specialized tour guide	- Cannot work at other specialty different than the licensed one - Can work only as the territorial scope of its License A

Schematically, the tour guiding license proposed is:



To summarize, specialized tour guides can only be so if they are either national or local tour guides. Host persons are not any kind or category of tour guide. General tour guides (national or local) cannot conduct specialty tours at sites if they have not been licensed as such. This way, the cultural and natural sites of Lebanon will ensure the high level of tour guides working within their premises and protected areas.

| 15.2 Annex 2. Good practices for site design in tourism buildings and infrastructure

1. Minimize areas that disturb vegetation, land mobilization, and any alteration of water channels.
2. Locate the structures to take maximum advantage of passive energy utilization technologies to provide comfort.
3. Understand the site as an integrated ecosystem with changes occurring over time in a dynamic balance. The impact of development must be confined within these natural changes.
4. Provide space to process all waste created at the site (facilities for collection/recycling, digesters, lagoons) so that reusable/recyclable resources are not lost, and hazardous or destructive waste is not released onto the environment.
5. Considerations for adapting the design to the site should be taken for which the natural and cultural characteristics of the context must be analysed: winds, sunstroke and sun, rain, topography, geology and soils, aquatic ecosystems, vegetation, flora and fauna, and visual landscape characteristics. In a cultural context, the archaeology and history of the area should be analysed, as well as community groups that currently live in the area.
6. Make sure that the designers start from the recognition and analysis of the context within which the site is framed, and not only the characteristics of the site itself.
7. Ensure that historic and cultural interest environments and buildings are identified, preserved, protected, restored, and/or reused.
8. The design must contribute to the revaluation and interpretation of the cultural and natural heritage of the destination, the area, and the region.
9. The negative human impact on the natural and cultural heritage must be minimized and/or mitigated.
10. To the extent possible, have small buildings that 'blend' with the landscape.
11. Avoid installing or building sources of unpleasant sounds or odours near tourist facilities or local communities.
12. Confirm that the architectural and overall design considers seasonal variations (e.g., rainfall, solar angle) and the existence or eventuality of natural hazards (e.g., landslides, dangerous plants or animals, floods).

13. Avoid the construction of tall buildings for accommodation (two-story maximum) and always look for an overall design that has organic forms in harmony with the environment and conforming to the topography of the land.
14. Plan an evacuation system in case of emergency.
15. Look for ways to access attractions through low impact means, such as footpaths.
16. Try to use the least polluting means of transport possible in terms of air, water, noise, and visual pollution.
17. Design and build an adequate network of trails using signage with ecological information and behavioural recommendations.
18. Do not follow the riverbank for long distances but only approach it at some attractive points. The design of trails and roads should minimize crossings of rivers and streams.
19. In mountainous terrain, do not trace the path over the ridge but try to follow the less elevated contours.
20. Avoid at all costs the existence of shared accesses for highly conflicting uses, for example, the movement of people and horses on the same narrow path.
21. The vegetation cover must be preserved and/or restored on the banks of the roads.
22. Preferably use recycled or waste materials for the construction of rolling surfaces or trails.
23. The construction of surfaces must use materials with colours and textures like those of the environment.
24. Avoid having external lights that can influence habitats. If it cannot be avoided, install them within 50 cm from the ground and place live fences between lights and natural habitats to prevent them from being direct.
25. Use low-intensity lights.
26. Insulate by construction or living fences the noise that produces alterations to the environment. Include in the code of ethics regulations on activities that generate noise: rooms, recreation, and social areas.
27. Establish an hour to turn off all sources of noise: power plants, motors, sound equipment.
28. In coastal areas or marine parks, use special techniques and resources for the design of trails, such as aerial or elevated trails, self-guided trails with special signage for water or underwater canals or routes (buoys for example).

15.3 Annex 3. Good practices for architectural design in tourism

1. Take advantage and enhance the opportunities for visitor to be sensitized, experience, and/or understand the resources used in the architectural and site design.
2. Adjust the design to the evaluation parameters used by the classification or categorization systems of 'green' or environmentally responsible hotels.
3. Take advantage of local materials and labour, including local artists and artisans.
4. Include quiet and private areas where visitors can rest and reflect in a natural environment.
5. Ensure that the developer has considered forecasts for future expansions to minimize future demolition and waste.
6. Adopt technologies and mechanisms to guarantee a rational use of water and energy resources.
7. At special sites, take into consideration possible technical requirements such as floods, earthquakes, rock falls, or other.
8. The control of insects, reptiles, and rodents is contemplated in the design and use of materials.
9. To the extent possible, provide opportunities for visitors with special requirements and universal accessibility (e.g., walkers for wheelchairs, ramps instead of stairs, specially designed sanitary services, wide access).
10. In rural areas, include special use areas such as boots cleaning, outdoor showers, areas for hanging raincoats or storing camping equipment.

11. The proposed architectural design must be viable, economically, and technologically sustainable, and socially adoptable.
12. It must be based on long-term environmental considerations and not on strictly economic or short-term financial considerations.

| 15.4 Annex 4. Good practices during the construction stage

1. The selection of contractors for the construction stage should consider their previous construction experience in fragile sites and their ability to organize and build in rural and/or remote areas.
2. Construction sites, such as earthworks or waste disposal, should be planned and managed properly. For example: the definitive access roads should first be drawn, and construction and waste materials transported through them instead of making temporary paths or trails.
3. Excavations for foundations should, as far as possible, be done by hand, avoiding the use of heavy machinery.
4. Construction specifications should reflect environmental and conservation interests with respect to timber products and other construction materials. Use wood from forest plantations and eliminate the use of construction materials that contain harmful chemicals.
5. Those construction or decoration materials that are native to the area, renewable, and environmentally sensitive should be highlighted.
6. All construction debris should be removed from the site once the works are finished, and its final disposal should impact the environment as little as possible.
7. The soil and other materials extracted to create foundations must be redistributed in the vicinity of the construction.
8. To the extent possible, use self-construction techniques and designs that reduce time and complexity.

Minimize to the maximum:

- Sonic pollution.
- Deterioration of air quality.
- Pollution using vehicles, equipment, and machinery.

- Oil spills, paints, or other chemicals.
- Increased erosion, sedimentation, or soil compaction.
- Soil removal.
- Alteration of water courses and the quality or quantity of surface and/or underground water sources.
- Alteration and/or destruction of vegetation.
- Alteration, fragmentation, and/or destruction of habitats.
- Creation of barriers for wildlife movement.
- Introduction of exotic and/or invasive species.
- Alteration of wildlife life cycles.
- Alteration of flows and/or nutrient chains.
- Introduction of food or strange habitats in the environment.

| 15.5 Annex 5. Good practices for decoration of buildings for tourism

1. Avoid equipment with high energy consumption and hazardous materials.
2. Limit and control the artificial lighting of the site to avoid disruption of the night life cycles of plants and animals.
3. Locate or treat windows with crystals so that they do not reflect the environment from the outside to prevent birds from crashing against them (they can be provided with eaves to prevent reflection of the sun, place silhouettes and/or polarize them).
4. Place enough areas to store travel tools such as instruments, equipment, suitcases, bags, backpacks, and boots, particularly in places with extended stays.
5. Locate landscape elements such as trees or shrubs so that they facilitate the natural ventilation of buildings and thus avoid unnecessary energy consumption in general.
6. Use air conditioning only in spaces where it is strictly necessary. If ventilation is required, it is recommended to use electric fans, preferably those that are placed in the ceiling.
7. Use lighting and air conditioner switches that turn off automatically while guests are not in rooms.
8. Use televisions and sound equipment with discretion in multiple use areas, preferably for educational purposes.
9. To the extent possible, arrange several small areas for rest and camaraderie, locating them

both inside and outside the buildings. Establish a comfortable living area inside the premises for when the external conditions are extreme (wind, heat, sandstorms, mosquitoes, rain, cold, etc).

10. Use colours, textures, or other elements to create different environments. For interiors, the light absorption and reflection capabilities of colours should be considered in terms of their ability to provide clarity or shade without the use of energy.
11. Locate maintenance work away from public areas.
12. Use live hedges and other natural elements to control noise between public and private areas.
13. Use 'natural' colours and other decorative elements that allow 'camouflage' with the exteriors and that harmonize with the cultural values of the area.
14. Use decoration details that allow the visitor to learn and become aware of the environmental conservation measures that have been incorporated into the design and operation of the facilities. For example, the use of cloth towels and/or dispensaries for paper and soaps instead of individual packages, biodegradable cleaning products, informational posters on the advantages of using these elements, signs on dampers that remind visitor to turn off the lights when they are not in use, water or electricity consumption meters in visible places, and inform the visitor about its sources as well as the standards of use in protected areas, as well as in urban and rural areas.
15. Favour the visitors' contact with natural elements such as the sound of the wind, the sea, or the perception of characteristic odours of the area. For example: keeping doors and windows open whenever possible or sowing native plants in the gardens and green areas to please the eye and attract animals and insects.
16. Create spaces for common use in which clients can relate directly to the local community, its people, and to the daily work of area personnel. For example: having open kitchen areas; allowing visitor access for observation of alternative green energy sources, compost manufacturing, or other ethical and conscious treatment and use of the site's resources; enabling areas within facilities for residents to hold meetings or crafts making.
17. Preferably, use decorative elements that are both educational and informative.

18. Offer guests and visitors access to consultation material (books, newspapers, native flora and fauna species lists, slide projector maps, TVs, etc.) and comfortable furniture for reading, as well as notebooks for bookmarks and observations on the educational material.
19. Use pollution efficient low-impact technology equipment and furniture.
20. Select high-quality furniture and comply with standard measures to diminish impact.
21. Display guidelines on environmental conduct and behaviour for tourists and staff in visible places.
22. Have trained personnel attend the installation and maintenance of all equipment properly.
23. Prepare the facilities to have evacuation plans and protocols in case of fires, storms, floods, earthquakes, and other natural and human caused emergencies, as well as the needed equipment for each case according to legal standards and procedures.

15.6 Annex 6. General mitigation measures of works and constructions

To receive a construction license, a company or person should present a proposal of measures to mitigate resulting impacts. The following recommendations are applicable before the start, during the execution, and after the construction work. They are general suggestions and do not exempt the applicant from the obligation to carry out the environmental impact assessment according to the standards established by the specific regulations of Lebanon.

a. Measures of land clearing, weeding, opening of accesses:

It is recommended to limit these measures to the surface to be built and the immediate area to intervene with complementary surfaces, such as perimeter paths, access paths, and other complementary areas. Weeding around each building will be carried out according to fire prevention guidelines only, not allowing generalized weeding with the intention of landscaping. Cleaning should only be done manually.

b. Measurements on the construction of the workshop:

Construction of the workshop must be carried out by means of demountable structures. The construction of subfloors or waterproofing foundations of the ground will not be allowed unless their final use is a building for tourist operation, and they are shown in the approved technical plans.

c. Sanitary installation on site:

In the case of building a latrine for the use of personnel during the execution of works, it must comply with the same requirements as for absorbent wells and nitrifying beds, and with the same construction characteristics for workshops. Once its use ends, the installation will be dismantled and the well will be cleansed and filled, restoring the vegetal cover.

d. Maintenance and daily cleaning of work wastes:

The builder is responsible for keeping the property free of work waste, such as leftover materials, containers, and disposable wrappers. To this end, the building must provide for the installation of suitable containers and must periodically remove the waste outside the area and deposit it in landfills authorized by the municipality, in accordance with law.

e. Stockpiling and stowage of materials:

For the stockpiling of materials, the least possible impact on the surface must be foreseen, in particular those likely to produce soil compaction. The stockpiling of materials inside the boundaries of fragile areas or the affectation of adjacent properties should not be allowed.

f. Elaboration and manipulation of cements, mixtures, and concretes:

All the mixtures to elaborate in work must be done by machine or in troughs. In no case should its elaboration be performed on natural soil. In the execution of exterior plasters, the excess that spills on the natural soil must be removed.

g. Prevention of fires:

During the execution of works in tourist villas and in the lands approved for tourist visits, fire extinguishers should be counted according to law in relation to the number of humans present and the dimensions of the building. It is recommended to consider additionally a drum of 200 litres of water reserved exclusively for an initial response to fire. In the case of more complex works, the local authority should determine the minimum equipment required.

h. Noise generation:

The builder should propose measures to minimize noise generation, except for those strictly coming from the use of machinery proper to the work in progress. On this regard, resting hours of local communities should be observed, as well as those of non-working days, during which this type of work may not be carried out. The prohibition of devices with outdoor loudspeakers must be strictly observed.

i. Handling and stockpiling of fuels:

If the use of fuels and/or lubricants is required, these shall be stockpiled in perfectly hermetic containers and shall be handled on impermeable trays, in such a way as to avoid any spillage on the natural soil.

j. Restitution and maintenance of the areas affected by the works:

Finally, the contractor must propose the form of restitution of areas affected by the works. All areas not occupied by the construction itself but are affected by the tasks inherent to the work, such as trenches, areas affected by the collection of materials, etc., should be restored to their original state. Spaces affected by ornamental landscaping should be limited to the areas immediate to the construction itself, leaving the rest of the surface in its natural state and proceeding only to weeding.

| 15.7 Annex 7. Tourism income generation options for pas

15.7.1 Comments on entrance fees for PAs

- An entrance fee disposition is needed for the PAs in Lebanon. The MoE in coordination with MoT should define legally entrance fees to protected areas of Lebanon.
- Biosphere reserves as well as World Heritage sites should have entrance fees, and incomes should go to national environmental funds or national heritage funds. This would create direct funding incomes (not coming from Treasury) to support their maintenance, management, and protection.
- An economic study of entrance fees options should be conducted to identify the most feasible and profitable ways to implement them, as well as to define the income and treasure management of these fees, e.g., how they are to be collected, managed, controlled, distributed, etc.

15.7.2 Comments on licensing for PAs

- The main principle for PA tourism license recommendations is that any tourism service supplier or operator might have a special license issued by MoE with MoT to conduct any economic activity at any PA.

- Any tourism service supplier cannot apply for a PA license if they are not complying with the legal framework that rules its economic activity (e.g., transportation and driver licenses before asking for a tourism transportation license for the PAs). If they do not comply with their own activity regulations; their application should not be accepted.

- There are two important definitions to proceed with licenses:

- Tourism license or permission for PAs: it will be the unilateral administrative act that enables a person or a business company to develop or perform a defined service or operation within a PA. This license gives a working permit and right to the licensed entity to conduct economic activities within PAs, under certain conditions and requirements. This license can be rescinded in case of failure to meet or comply with the contractual agreement, illegal or unacceptable actions, or an emergency.

- Tourism service provider for PAs: is a person or a business enabled by the MoE, either as licensed or concessionaire, to accomplish services linked with visitors and tourism in general.

- Different types of licenses are possible. The final list should be defined by MoE in close coordination with the MoT:

- License for construction and building
- License for tour guides
- License for accommodations
- License for tour operation
- License for shops, kiosks, souvenirs, etc.
- License for transport inside the PA
- License for food and beverage supply inside the PA
- License for tourism service providers of PA

- Licenses will be awarded under completion of requirements. Afterwards, if any licensed company or person contravenes the license dispositions, it must be punished with fines.

15.7.3 Comments on concessions for PAs

• What is a concession?

A concession is when a management institution (or owner) gives a special right of temporary use of a fiscal asset, with a pre-established purpose and conditions, and where the monitoring, inspection, and control stays with the management institution that provides the concession.

Concessions can vary depending on many factors and conditions. They can vary depending on the kind of investments, type of concessionaires, type of roles to be accomplished, etcetera.

The main goal of tourism concessions within protected areas is to help enhance the quantity and quality of tourism services in the PA network of Lebanon. This is done through promoting and attracting investments of different levels and to cover different tourism services (support infrastructure, equipment, services), as well as through the management capacity that a third party or partner must provide within the PA (e.g., in knowledge, intrapreneurship, know how, skills). Tourism concessions intend to develop tourism activities in PAs up to sustainable levels. They will represent buildings, construction, and operation of infrastructure for leisure services in a sustainable tourism framework. This shall mean higher visitor satisfaction, a wider diversity and quality of experiences, better environmental and cultural education, and new means of support to local, regional, and national development.

Among the different benefits coming from tourism related concessions within PAs are:

- To develop tourism products and experiences with international quality levels and following best practices.
- To enhance tourism and protected areas' management capacity and skills (ideas, knowledge, entrepreneurship, know how, professionalization, etc.).
- To have adequate infrastructure and services of highly demanded natural and cultural areas, aligned with tourism master plans for each PA.
- To build, operate, maintain, replace, rehabilitate, and manage all infrastructure related to tourism activities, as well as others not directly related (e.g., research, inspection and patrolling, protection, etc.).
- To guarantee the regularity, quantity, and quality of tourism services.
- To support the MoE management functions in terms of ecosystems protection and environmental awareness.

- To optimize and enhance the 'guardian' functions and roles of PAs, and to improve their dedication to the most essential ones.

It is important to mention that a tourism concession in a protected area gives temporary rights of use of a certain land to accomplish an economic activity (tourism and leisure related) and to facilitate the tourism experience in the area in a sustainable way. It does not mean a total exclusivity to conduct tourism in the area. A concessionaire must manage tourism activity, receiving visitors and other tour companies or operators equally. It has the right to operate services in a specific area or PA but must do so for every visitor despite the tour operator or service provider.

Finally, even though a concession is given to manage tourism services in a protected area, the MoE has the final responsibility of administration and guardianship of any PA, and that responsibility is non-delegable under any circumstance, since nature conservancy and preservation are a general right and interest of the people of Lebanon.

• Why to implement a tourism concession within protected areas?

The objective of protected areas is basically to protect and preserve representative samples of biological diversity, species of wild flora and fauna, endangered species, geological and geographical singularities, and cultural evidence in general. Additionally, along with respecting the previous objectives, PAs also provide opportunities for research, education, and leisure activities. Tourism in its various forms (ecotourism, adventure tourism, ethnic tourism, conventional tourism, etc.) is an essential part of a protected area's dynamics, either to support conservation goals or to provide the tools to enjoy and learn about them.

According to these goals, there are many services for visitors that should be provided in protected areas: direct services, such as the rental of equipment; and indirect services, such as an electrical system. A decision must be made by the protected area authority on the level of each service, the method of delivering services, and the financing for each service

There are two ways to go about this: insourcing and outsourcing. Insourcing should involve the authority functioning like a business or public utility, with the protected area facilities and staff providing visitor services. For outsourcing, the protected area contracts a third party to deliver a service. Outsourcing of tourism services to a company or organization has both benefits and disadvantages. The case for private management of resources on public lands is often one of efficiency: PA resources may be best managed by specialized firms providing services to visitors.

When public institutions do not have the expertise to perform a service, or when they lack the funding or legal ability required to build such capability in-house, transference of rights on the lands or on the activities to other organizations can relieve public institutions from resource constraints of budget, capability, or expertise.

These fundamental goals require a certain level of development within protected areas to be sufficiently prepared to manage sustainable visits and activities. Any imbalance between stress to protected areas (caused by visitors or activities of any kind) and the capacity to handle it (reinforced by infrastructure, activities management, logistics, etc.) will end in the unsustainability of the protected area itself.

For several reasons, concessions are a common tool to manage protected areas, including the following:

- Because the concessionaires can be experts that will help to solve the specifics of various activities.
- Because there is not enough capacity at the protected areas institution to handle either one specific activity or all of them as a whole.
- Because there is not enough budget or executive capacity to manage tourism activities properly, etc. Tourism on its side is a tool that can contribute to reach goals of protected areas with an economic activity. It provides economic resources while at the same time providing educational experiences that help raise awareness among visitors and local communities. Tourism linked with protected areas includes the following benefits:
 - It is one of the main financial sources of conservational activities.
 - Helps protected areas to accomplish a key role in local economic development, generating benefits to local communities.
 - Boosts the educational and awareness role of protected areas while allowing interactions between visitors, nature, and local inhabitants.
 - Allows access and knowledge of protected areas to the society, helping to increase environmental



awareness and commitment.

Tourism concessions within protected areas are a great tool to reinforce and support PAs to accomplish their role and to reach their objectives.

• Partners involved

Since the operation of tourism services in protected areas is a complex professional activity, concessions can be of different levels of complexity and scope, and each can have different types of partners. The most common types of partners that could be involved in concessions are:

- Private companies
- Non-profit organizations
- Local community organizations
- Another government department (e.g., tourism, a directorate, etc.)
- A university or research organization
- A joint-venture company (e.g., public-private, private-community, public-community, or public-private-community)

Each possible partner has different advantages and special features. Thus, it is necessary to consider the desired outcome for each criterion when selecting the type of partner for a PA.

• Differences and advantages of working with different partners

In general, and depending on the aspects and criteria considered, each partner has a different approach, and this will determine the particular outcome of the partner management of the concession. Every protected area can have different goals and priorities, and the MoE will have to define these before looking for a specific type of partner in the concession bidding process. Below is a list of criteria and the particular outcome that every potential partner will likely provide for each of them. The following is, of course, a generalization of outcomes. Outcomes will always depend upon the effectiveness and efficiency of the PA co-administration, as well as on the related legislation in the country.

Table 1. Differences and advantages of outsourcing partners and insource ⁷

Theme	Criteria for choosing partner	Outsource partners				Insourse PA Authority
		Company	Community	NGO	Joint venture	
Financial Issues	Protected area (PA) and government costs	Low cost to PA	Variable costs to PA	Low cost to PA	Moderate cost to PA	High cost to PA
	Gaining income for the PA	Moderate	Low	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate, depends on policy
	Expense of contract management, monitoring	High	High	Moderate	High	Low
	Expense of resolving conflicts	High	High, variable	High, variable	High	Low
Tourism Operations	Quality of visitor services	High	Low (unless managed by for-profit subcontractor)	Moderate, variable	High	Moderate, depends on tourism policy
	Specialised tourism expertise	High	Low	Hired by NGO	High	Hired by PA
	Access to new tourist markets	More access	Low access	More access	More access	Depends on PA policy
	Tourism workable with low visitor numbers	No	No	Yes	No	No
	Direct contact of PA staff with PA visitors	Low	Low	Low	Low	High
Socio-economic Impact	Opportunity for community equity	Depends on contracts	High	High	High	High
	Business and job creation for local population	Moderate, variable	High	Moderate	High	High
	Flexibility in purchasing	High	High	High	High	Low
Governance	Concession selection process open and transparent	High	High	Low	High	None
	Control of services by PA	Moderate	Low	Low	Moderate	High
	Potential source of corruption during procurement	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
	Concessionaire influence PNC of Comores policy	Moderate	Low	Low	High	None
	Concessionaires gain political power	Moderate	Yes	Moderate	Moderate	Not a problem
Risks	Political influences on PA management by concessionaire	High potential	Moderate potential	Moderate potential	High potential	None, no concessionaire
	Conflict over PA objectives	Moderate	High	Moderate	High	None
	Reversibility of decisions	Low	Low	High	Low	High
	Transaction costs to establish partnership	Moderate	High	Moderate	High	None
	Difficulty of removing a bad concessionaire	High	High	Moderate	High	None, no concessionaire
	Bankruptcy of the concessionaire	Problem	Problem	Problem	Problem	Not a problem
	Employment rules and	Company	Government	Company	Company	Government

⁷ Anna Spenceley, Susan Snyman, and Paul F. J. Eagles, "Guidelines for tourism partnerships and concessions for protected areas: Generating sustainable revenues for conservation and development," Convention on Biological Diversity and IUCN (June 2017).

Theme	Criteria for choosing partner	Outsource partners				Insource PA Authority
		Company	Community	NGO	Joint venture	
	regulations	rules	rules	rules	rules	rules
	Staff working on all PA needs	Seldom	Sometimes	Sometimes	Sometimes	Not a problem
	Ability to use volunteers	Moderate	High	High	Moderate	Moderate
	Ability to obtain donations of money and time	Moderate	High	High	High	Low
and Environment conservation	Likelihood of contributing to biodiversity conservation	Moderate	Low	High	Moderate	High
	Likelihood of applying an environmental management system (e.g., renewable energy, water conservation, recycling)	Moderate	Low	High	High	Low
	Likelihood of using third-party certification to demonstrate sustainability	High	Moderate	Moderate	High	Low

Depending on the specific PA goals, MoE should look for an insource solution or for an outsource partner.

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SUSTAINABLE TOURISM STRATEGY FOR THE MOUNTAINS OF LEBANON



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