**Lebanon**



**By Joe Cataldo**

**Introduction**

Lebanon is a very interesting country. It has fascinating cultures, history, food, holidays and sports, and religion.

* Currency- Lebanese Pounds
* Population- 5.8 million
* Location- Middle East (Asia)
* Geography- Mountains and forests of cedar trees
* Capital City- Beirut
* Dominant Religions 70% Muslim 30% Christian
* Language- Arabic

Lebanon’s culture, sports, religion, history and holidays are all important and interesting parts of this country.



**Lebanese Culture**

Families and faith are the most important things for Lebanese people. The Lebanese believe that their personal achievements are a reflection of their whole family, and not just themselves. It is common for many generations of a family to live together or close by. Tradition has been that the father supports the family by working outside their home, while the mother stays home to raise the children (although this is beginning to change). Many people’s homes were demolished due to war. The people are working very hard to restore what was lost. Lebanese enjoy any opportunity to celebrate with friends and family. Usually, when they gather to celebrate something, they have large meals which can last two to three hours, often around midday. One of the Lebanese’s highest priorities is education. Many schools were destroyed by the war. The schools that still stand often do not have the best supplies. Most families will send their children to private schools if they can afford it. Students are encouraged to earn a college degree. If they earn one, they are more likely to be successful in life. When children are not in school, they can often be found visiting their families, playing sports, or watching television.

**Holidays in Lebanon**

Muslims in Lebanon celebrate Ramadan. It runs through the whole ninth month in the Islamic Calendar. During Ramadan, they fast all day and feast at night. The people often sleep in the afternoon and are awake during the night. Those who celebrate the holiday have joyful and lively nights throughout the month. They also celebrate Ashura, where they mourn the loss of Hussein who was the grandson of Muhammad. This holiday is celebrated in the first 10 days of Muharram. On the final day, many people reenact the scene of when Hussein was murdered. The people move in a parade through the area and are watched by large crowds. Some people punish themselves by slicing themselves with sharp objects to remember the pain of when he died. The Christians celebrate Christmas and Easter just as most Christians do here in the USA with trees and presents. However in Lebanon, they also celebrate the Epiphany, where they recall the presenting of the infant Jesus to the Magi. Special cakes and syrups are made for the event. A nonreligious holiday in Lebanon is the Lebanese Independence Day. That day commemorates when Lebanon became its own government. Lebanon used to be governed by France and part of Syria. Most of the celebrations occurred in the capital city of Beirut. Independence Day is a national holiday. Many people have large feasts for this holiday, and visit their families and friends. The final major holiday is the Baalbek Festival. It was held in Baalbek. It is a huge arts celebration. It’s the biggest festival held in Lebanon and people from all over the world to celebrate. World-class artists come to perform music and folk dances. The celebration is set around ancient temple ruins. The crowds’ favorite performance is usually the ballet performance in the evening near the ancient temples.

**Sports in Lebanon**

Lebanon’s most popular sports are soccer, basketball, and skiing. Soccer is by far the most popular sport of them all. In most places in Lebanon, it is called football instead. There are two major teams: the Beirut Nejmeh and the Beirut Ansar. The game is played locally in large cities as well as in rural communities. Lebanon was the host of the Asian cup finals in 2000. Basketball is most popular in large cities like Beirut. It’s also played in schools around the country. There are six ski resorts in the Lebanese mountains. They are packed with skiers from November until May. From 1948 and onward, Lebanon always sent skiers to compete in the winter Olympics, that is, until, 1994, when new Olympic regulations stopped small countries such as Lebanon from competing. Some of the minor sports in Lebanon are boating, waterskiing, paragliding, hiking, and mountain biking.

**Religion in Lebanon**

Roughly 60% of Lebanese people are Muslim. 39% are Christian and 1% are Jewish or other religious minorities. The Islamic religion started in seventh century Arabia by the prophet Muhammad. Those who believe in the Islamic faith are known as Muslims. The religion has five “pillars”: the creed, prayer, the giving of Alms, fasting, and performing the hajj. The Islamic creed is “There is no God but god and Muhammad is the prophet of God.” Muslims believe that angels carry the messages of God, prophets receive the messages of God, and holy books express the messages. They also believe that on Earths final day, the angel Asrafil will blow on a trumpet. They say after that, everyone will go to eternal paradise or endure eternal punishment. The Muslim bible, the Koran, tells that there are twenty eight prophets. Muslims must pray at least five times a day: dawn, noon, late afternoon, sunset and night. They usually pray together in large groups. They must wash themselves before they pray. All Muslims who earn enough must donate 2.5 percent of their money to the poor. This is called giving alms. Also, during the holiday month of Ramadan, all followers of the Islamic faith do what is called fasting. That is where they refrain from eating or drinking between sunrise and sunset. Most Muslims learn to do this by the age of ten. All Muslims who can afford it perform the hajj. This is where they leave their land and have all of their wrongful deeds that they have done in the past forgiven. Another religious group in Lebanon is the Shiites. That religion dates back to when Ali, the cousin of Muhammad was murdered. Ali was going to be the new leader after Muhammad died…until he himself was murdered. The Shiites believe that after Muhammad, there were only twelve holy men. They were said to be Ali and his descendants. They also believe that the twelfth holy man did not die and will return someday to be the world’s savior. Another Religion is the Druze. They believe that when somebody dies, they are reborn as something else. They want to protect the secrets of their religion; therefore, they will sometimes pose as Muslims or Christians to avoid outsiders knowing of their true religion. They also believe that God has taken several human forms. There are roughly 2.3 million Druze worldwide. The final Religion in Lebanon is the Catholics. They are led by the pope who lives in Vatican City. They believe in God and his son Jesus who sits at his right hand. They also believe in many different saints who have played various roles in the old stories in the catholic bible.

**Conclusion**

I chose Lebanon as my country to research for this project because many of my ancestors on my mom’s side of the family came from there. I wanted to learn more about where my family is from. Someday, I would visit Lebanon if I can so that I can see all the amazing things there for myself.

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