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Guide to Beirut

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Where To Eat

BALIMA

Place Balima, Ghalghoul Street, Beirut (00 961 1 98 52 95). Join the beau monde at Balima, a modish café with a cobbled outdoor area where freshly made tartines are savoured alongside Baqaa Valley's finest wines.

CAFE GEMMAYZEH

Rue Gouraud, Gemmayzeh, Beirut. An old-fashioned and elegant institution, located just beyond Paul on the southern corner of Gemmayzeh and Place des Martyrs. By day, enjoy mezze in the company of gentlemen whiling away the hours over hookah and a game or two of backgammon; by night, you can listen to some wonderful live music here.

CENTRALE

Mar Maroun Church Street, Beirut (00 961 1 57 58 58; www.centralerestaurant.com). As much an architectural destination as a culinary one, Centrale combines deftly produced French nouvelle cuisine with the bold vision of architect Bernard Khoury.

Nightlife

BY THE WAY

Rue Makdisi, Beirut. Have a whisky at the bar with Ahmad, who plays the best music in Hamra.

BURGUNDY

752 Gouraud Street, Beirut (00 961 1 99 98 20; www.burgundybeirut.com). Sample limited-edition French vintages at wine bar and restaurant Burgundy, where Canadian chefs Brody White (L'Atelier de Joël Robuchon alumnus) and Jason Whitfield (previously at Market by Jean-Georges in Vancouver) are part of the young team causing a gastronomic stir.

DANY'S BAR

Hamra, Beirut (00 961 390 4547; www.danyslb.com). Everyone goes to Dany's, located in a side-street south of Starbucks on Rue Hamra. There is live music most nights of the week.

MUSIC HALL

Starco Building, Omar Daouk Street, Beirut (00 961 3 80 75 55). Wrap up the evening at the endlessly entertaining Music Hall, a former cinema-turned-cabaret venue that's popular with everyone from twentysomethings to octogenarians.

SYDNEY'S BAR

Intercontinental Le Vendôme, Ain El Mreisseh, Rafis Al Hariri (00 961 1 369 280; www.levendomebeirut.com). Sydney's Bar, at the top of Le Vendôme hotel, is a Beirut institution and has survived the eponymous barman. Exuding the charm of a New York rooftop bar, Sydney's offers a panorama over Beirut's Corniche, which extends to the lights marking the villages in the hills surrounding Beirut. Sample the best Lebanese coffee here on your first night in the city, then sail out into Gemmayzeh on a natural high.

TORINO

Rue Gouraud, Gemmayzeh, Beirut. Over in Gemmayzeh, on east side of Rue Gouraud, is Torino, which is very Parisian in feel. It's a relaxed place to have a sandwich by day, and is rammed full of revellers by night.