Trail of the Barouk River Valley
(Moukhtara – Marj Bisri)

درب وادي نهر الباروك
(المختارة - مرج بسري)

Aamatour • Ain Qani • Baadarane • Bater • Botmeh • Haret Jandal
Jebaa • Khreibe • Maasser el Chouf • Moukhtara • Mrosti • Niha

عماطور • عين قنی • بعذران • باتر • بطم • حارة جندل • جباع
خربة • معاصر الشوف • المختارة • مرسثي • نیحا
Introduction
This booklet is a brief introduction to the rich natural and cultural attractions of the villages of the Higher Chouf as well as to the recreational activities available, in particular the hiking trails.

The Federation of Municipalities of the Higher Chouf (F.M.H.C.) welcomes you in our region and wishes you a memorable visit.

Location
The region of the Higher Chouf played an important role in the history of Lebanon due to its strategic location as the main link between the Mediterranean coastline and the Beqaa valley. As a result the area is rich in roads, paths and archaeological monuments that are worth exploring.

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The trail begins at the Church of Our Lady in Moukhtara, passes through the Mamluk bridge of Birket el Aarouss, descends and crosses the Barouk river over the Baddeh Bridge into the western slope of the river valley. The trail continues south on a footpath recently renovated along the Barouk river, on the left of which is the Baddeh water mill.

The trail then proceeds to the Bou Matar bridge and watermill, up the eastern slopes below the village of Ain Qani, crosses the Ain Qani stream, and begins a slight descent to the valley passing over an aqueduct belonging to an old water mill before arriving to the bridge of Sheikh Houssein.

Below the village of Aamatour the trail points south towards the village of Haret Jandal and crosses the Salman river before reaching the bottom of the Barouk valley. It then runs along the Barouk river, crosses over a small stone bridge at the Ain el Zaïtoun stream, and arrives to Marj Bisri.

Trail Length: 10 Km   Level: medium

درب وادي نهر الباروك (المختارة – مرج بسري)

يبدأ الدرب من كنيسة السيدة في المختارة، مروراً بجسر بركة العروس وهو جسر قديم تم بناوته في الفترة المملوكية عام 1507 ثم ينحدر باتجاه الوادي عابراً بذلك نهر الباروك فوق جسر بديٍّ إلى الجهة الغربية.

يستمر الدرب جنوباً عبر مجرى عين قاني حيث يوجد إلى يساره طاحونة بديٍّ ثم يتابع حتى جسر وطاحونة أبو مطر ليعبّر تلداً بجسر مملوكية تحت قرية عين قاني ثم يتابع عابراً بذلك ساقية عين قاني حيث يتهجه نحو مئات من الأمتار إلى الجنوب فوق قناة ماء لطاحونة قديمة. حيث يصل إلى جسر الشيخ حسين. بعد ذلك يتابع الدرب مساره باتجاه جندل و يعبّر نهر سلمان قبل أن يصل إلى أسفل الوادي متبلاً مساره بمحاذاة نهر الباروك. و يعبّر مجرى عين الزيتون على جسر حجري صغير ليصل بعد ذلك إلى مرج بسري.

طول الدرب 10 كم، متوسط الصعوبة
The oldest monument in Aamatour is a Roman temple located outside the village in the Marj Bisri area. It is also renowned for its beautiful traditional houses and characteristic gates dating from the Ottoman period, such as Dar Bou Hamza (1215H/1800 AD), Dar Ahmad Ali Abed el Samad (1273H/1856 AD), and Dar Ahmad Sleiman Abou Chakra. Aamatour is home to a number of religious monuments such as two Druze khalwat and a 19th century Catholic Church as well as its old trails. Aamatour is also rich in water springs, the oldest one is Ain el Foqr (the spring of poverty).
Ain Qani

- Altitude 830 meters above sea level
- Distance from Beirut 60 km

Famous for the Birket el Aarous site where there is a water mill dating from the late 19th century, and a bridge built in 1507 during the late Mamluk era - both on the Nabeher Mershed River. The Birket el Aarous bridge is considered one of the oldest bridges in Mount Lebanon. In close proximity, there are also the two bridges, Shalouf Bridges, near the main road built in the early 20th century. One can also enjoy the architecture of the 18th and 19th century houses of the Joumblatt and Zein el Dine families in the center of the village. Hikers will enjoy walking the ancient trail linking Moukhtara to Ain Qani through the Birket el Aarous Bridge.

- الإرتفاع عن سطح البحر: 830 متر - تبعد 60 كم عن بيروت.
Known for its Ottoman houses and monuments, particularly the Palace of Cheikh Ali Pacha Joumblatt and its monuments, as well as Taj el Dine and Abou Chakra gates. Recent excavations in Baadarane revealed Roman ruins that include grape presses, tombs cut into the rock, and sarcophagi. Hundred of ceramic shreds from the Phoenician, Hellenistic, Roman, and Byzantine eras have been found between Khreibeh and Baadarane villages. In the later, a well equipped guesthouse and wood cabins can welcome overnight visitors who can also have a great experience by visiting the village’s workshop of rural products and loom’s atelier (old waving machine).

- Altitude 1100 meters    - Distance from Beirut 50 km.
Famous for its church, its old 19th and early 20th century houses, and for its old water mill which was still functioning until the early 1980s, Bater is also well known for its water springs such as the Ain el Kamal, and for its two grottos Ain el Masqfeh and el Keif. An old hiking trail links Bater to Marj Bisri and its historical and archaeological monuments such as the Roman temple “Cleopatra Castle” as it is called by the inhabitants of Bater. Of interest is the bridge Jisr al Saqyia and its three arches. A natural park situated in the valley near the Marj Bisri is one of Bater’s recent attractions.

- Altitude 800 meters - Distance from Beirut 60 km

تشتهر باتر بكنيستها. تناولتها القديمة من القرن التاسع عشر وأوائل القرن العشرين. ويعطى مناخها القديمة التي كانت لا تزال تعمل حتى أوائل الثمانينيات. كما تشتهر ببناءها مثل عين الكمال وباثنين من الكهوف (مغارة الكيف ومغارة المسقفة). ويوجد درب فند باتر إلى مرج بسري والتي معالمه التاريخية والأنشطة مثل المعبد الروماني الذي يسميه سكان باتر بقصر كليوباترا. ويمكن للمرء أن يزور جسر الساقية المميز بأقواسه الثلاثة وحديقة طبيعية تقع في الوادي قرب مرج بسري وهي واحدة من معالم باتر الحديثة.
Botmeh is famous for its old stone houses, its old churches and an ancient grape press. Visitors interested in archaeology can visit the Roman sarcophagus and the old oak tree *Sindyenet Fornaya*, where recent archaeological field survey found ceramic shreds from the Roman and Medieval periods. Botmeh is also renowned for its pine woods, the geological caves of el Dabaa, el Houwweh and Ain el Basatine, old springs of Ain el Horch and Ain el Bayyad, as well as animal and plant fossils. A hiking trail starts in Maasser el Chouf, passes through Botmeh and continues to Moukhtara.

- Altitude 1050 meters - Distance from Beirut 55 km
This village is known for its very old oak trees located in the center of the village, as well as its old olive tree with a diameter of 4.50 meters, located outside the village in the El Basatine area. One can also visit architectural and archaeological monuments such as the 19th century house of the Mallak family, the 19th century bridge located in the El Dlaghine area and the ruins of Taket el Habess from the Roman, Byzantine and Medieval eras. The ruins of an ancient oil press can be seen near these ruins.
- Altitude between 1200 and 1800 meters  
- Distance from Beirut 70 km

So many natural elements, places and monuments make the reputation of Jebaa: its oak and pine forests known by the inhabitants as the Roman Woodland, an old grape press cut into the rock, the natural caves, the water sources of Ain Chaachouh and Ain el Dayaa, and its Roman temple and tombs in Maabour el Wadi (the passage of the Valley). Other ruins located in an area known as the Khirbeh are difficult to date. Moreover, a well equipped picnic area was created near Ain Chaachouh on the Lebanese Mountain Trail (the longest trail in Lebanon “440 km”).

- الارتفاع عن سطح البحر: بين ۱۲۰۰ و۱۸۰۰ متر - تبعد ۷۰ كم عن بيروت.

تشتهر جباع ببغاتها من الصنوبر والسنديان أو كما يطلق عليها اهل القرية أسم «الحرش الروماني». وبعصرة العنب القديمة المحفورة في الصخر والكهوف الطبيعية والينابيع والأعوين منها عين الشعشوعة وعين الضيعة. ومن معالمها القديمة المعبد الروماني والمقابر الموجودة في مكان يعرف باسم وادي المعبور. كذلك هناك أنقاض موجودة في مكان يسمى الخربة ما زال تأريخه غير معروف حتى وقتنا الحاضر. ولا بد من الإشارة إلى أنه أنشأت حديثا منطقة نزهة مجهزة قريب عين الشعشوعة على درب الجبل اللبناني الذي هو أطول درب في لبنان (۴۴۰ كم).
This village is known for its traditional Lebanese houses, its old oak tree and the Saint Georges Church. It is also known for its ancient ruins and monuments such as the oil presses, sarcophagi and the Joumblatt family Serail dating from the Ottoman period. There are also six water sources, Ain el Chatawiye, Ain el Jadida, Ain el Qadima, Ain el Mechqer, Ain Aadas, and Ain Amer. An old oak tree is located near the public school. Accommodations can be found in the local guesthouse as well as in several wood cabins.
This village is situated on the edge of the Al-Shouf Cedar Nature Reserve and is about 7 km from one of the oldest groves of cedar trees in Lebanon. Maasser is a rural traditional village with a town square, an old mill, an old oak and pine forest and two natural water sources. Recent archaeological studies revealed that Maasser has been inhabited since the 4th century BC, at the Hellenistic, Roman and Byzantine eras. The El Hosn ruins dates back to the Roman era as evidenced by tombs cut in the rock. On the trail going from Maasser to Moukhtara, there is an ancient and deserted water mill dating from the late 19th century and an Ottoman bridge that links the two sides of the valley between Maasser and Botmeh.

The Saint Michael Church and Convent are the two major religious monuments in Maasser.
- Altitude 850 meters  - Distance from Beirut 50 km

Moukhtara is well known for being the seat of the Joumblatt family, the leaders of the Druze community in Lebanon. The Joumblatt’s palace was built for the first time in the 17th century and was rebuilt in the mid 19th century. The town is also famous for its traditional old houses, its old oil presses and the two El Saydeh (Our Lady) churches. The late Mamlouk and early Ottoman bridge “Baddeh bridge” used to link Moukhtara to the villages of the Wadi el Barouk. Late 19th century water mills are numerous in the valleys near Moukhtara such as the Baddeh water mill.
The square of the village is particularly famous for the statue of Kamal Bek Joumblatt. Mrosti is renowned for its millennium oak woods, the Ottoman bridge in addition to the Roman and Byzantine ruins. There is also an old grape press and three natural springs: Ain el Ghabeh Ain el Tahta, and Jeita Spring. The Jeita Spring is considered blessed and holy. The Khalwat al Sheikh al Sadeq (Druze’s holy place) dates back to the 16th Century and is the main religious attraction of the village.
Niha

- Altitude between 1050 and 1850 meters - Distance from Beirut 65 km

Niha was inhabited since the Roman times, the Crusaders, the Mamluks’ and the Ottomans’. The most famous monument in Niha is the cave fortress (Cave of Tyron). This cave was fortified by the Crusaders, the Arabs, and the Mamluk and used to control the vital road linking Saida to the Beqaa Valley. The shrine of Nabi Ayoub, or Job, is the second most famous monument in Niha. The shrine is built on a summit overlooking the village of Niha, where the prophet Job is believed to be buried. Pilgrims frequently visit this site searching for its benediction.

Niha is rich in old springs such as Ain el Qataa, Nabeel Niha and the very old Ain el Halqoum. However one should not forget other very old or recent attractions that forged the celebrity of the village: its old traditional houses, its two ancient churches in Niha (Saint Joseph and Saint Georges) as well as two old bridges (El Jisr el Tahtani and Jisr Tariq el Nahr) and an old water mill. Niha now has a well run private guesthouse, and an information center run by the Shouf Biosphere Reserve.
Trail of the Barouk River Valley Map
 الخارطة درب وادي نهر الباروك

Legend

- **Roads**
- **Rivers**
- **Trail of the Barouk River Valley**

Federation of Municipalities of the Higher Chouf

Surrounding Villages

**Length of the Trail**
- Barouk-Bisri: 22.6km
- Barouk-Moukhtara: 12km
- Maasser-Moukhtara: 9.7km
- Moukhtara-Bisri: 10.6km

**Level:** Moderate