



OMV Lebanon Camps

The Camps in Lebanon:

In 1998 the German Order of Malta volunteers organised the first holiday camp for a group of Lebanese guests suffering from serious mental and physical disabilities. Since then, the model has grown to become a well-established project that is successfully run in coordination with the Lebanese Order of Malta volunteers.

Care homes in Lebanon, unlike in Western societies, receive minimal governmental support, and are almost exclusively reliant on private aid and donations to meet the living expenses of their guests. The limited and unreliable sources of available income render the task of caring for the patients extremely difficult, and challenges range from insufficient numbers of staff and trained carers (in some cases a mere 20 staff in total for 300 disabled guests), to seriously limited capacity (often with as many as 30 guests living in one room). We take guests from 2 or 3 care homes in and around Beirut and there will be the chance for all of us to visit the homes during our stay in Lebanon. The conditions that our guests live in can be quite shocking, however the love and support of the staff and guests in these homes is inspirational and makes the time and energy that we volunteer all the more meaningful.



The guests that are invited to take part in the camps are selected regardless of their faith or background. The vast majority have suffered serious neglect and have never received one-on-one care. As a result many have developed abnormal behaviour patterns such as self-inflicted injuries, depression, social apathy or complete withdrawal. Many of the guests cannot communicate very well, if at all, and the majority would only understand Lebanese. This inability to communicate can seem like an enormous barrier, however not only will there be a group of Lebanese volunteers with us on Camp and a small but very useful vocabulary list available, but also even the smallest actions can

communicate so much and the inability to talk does not seem to lower the general level of merriment on camp!

A typical day-to-day timetable would start at bright and early at 7.30am, when the guests will be washed, dressed and taken down to breakfast. After some chilling-out time on the terrace, probably to some cool tunes, there might be a group activity along the lines of a dressing up competition, a theatre production, a cookery session, fashion show or some inventive arts and crafts!

Lunch would be followed by maybe a walk to the local tavern, or another on-site activity – croquet tournaments, beauty sessions or themed parties being favourites. There will be cups of tea and most probably cake before Mass, and then it's time for more delicious Lebanese cuisine at supper. Before bed everyone on camp meets up to sing and dance, before the guests are taken to bed at around 7.30pm. At this point the fun is most definitely not over... 'Almaza' is a particularly popular Lebanese beer on camp, sometimes accompanied by a camp fire or the strumming of a guitar. The local tavern is also known to profit from our custom some evenings...



Most volunteers will care for one guest each week, who they will look after one-on-one throughout. This can be an intense experience but is incredibly rewarding. Almost all the activities during the week are engaged in, generally rather loudly, by the whole group and there will also be 'floating' volunteers on hand to step in when anyone needs a break or a cup of tea. The one-on-one relationship between the guest and the volunteer is a very special one, however in the course of the week on camp each volunteer gets to know every guest, and care for all of the brilliant characters.

For the guests, during the camps, it is a chance for them to experience the basic yet essential bonds of friendship and affection, and receive unconditional acceptance, joy and love. Many guests, even those unable to communicate effectively, will still remember the care and affection that they received in the months and years to come, and this stays with them and gives them the strength to bare the harsh conditions they live in day-to-day. Many spend the year waiting for the 'Summer Camps'.





Weekend in between:

The weekend in between the Camps is a chance for the volunteers to see Lebanon – to relax and visit the sites. With our wonderful Lebanese hosts we will wander from beaches to bars and from Byblos to Beirut, invariably finding the time to learn more about this amazing country while sampling ice cream and working on our suntans.

Location:

The Camps are being held in a different location this year, due to the enormous renovations taking place at the Order of Malta centre at Chabrouh, thus we will be staying in Sourat, in Batroun, not far from the ancient town of Byblos. The village is up in the mountains, above the Mediterranean coast, and promises to be just as stunning.

Dress code:

Believe it or not you will need both swimwear and woolly jumpers, the weather in the mountains is hot during the day but chilly at night. Casual and comfortable clothes are essential, and shorts, linen trousers and disposable t-shirts are recommended. Beaches, mountains and bars are also guaranteed though so bring swimwear, good shoes, and something smart for the weekend.

Travelling to Lebanon:

In line with our travel insurance and the liability cover through Hospitaller Ltd. we will be closely following and complying with the advice given by the foreign office about travelling to and around

Lebanon. Currently there is nothing to suggest that we should not be able to travel to the areas that we would be visiting and staying in, if this changes you will all be notified.

For more information visit the [Foreign Office website](#).

If you have any questions or would like more information about the Lebanon Camps please contact Harriet Sasada at Lebanon@omv.org.uk. We look forward to seeing you in Lebanon.

