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5 to 18 Mar 2011 14-days Syria & Lebanon of the Middle East

Rm6900 (per pax for group of 10 pax), Rm6700 (per pax for group of 11-13 pax) & Rm6300 (per pax for group of 14 or more pax)

Update 17 Jan 2011 - Trip cost is based on fares of Rm2570 + taxes Rm190 as at today. We now fly into Beirut Lebanon and fly home from Damascus Syria. We are offering a 7 days trip extension trip to Jordan covering Dead Sea, Dana Valley, Petra and Wadi Rum. Please let us know if you want to do this. Members will fly home from Amman Jordan. Note that we will be collecting a total of Rm3000 to cover the flight cost. Those who have paid the deposit of Rm1090, should deposit the difference of Rm1910.

Update 18 May 2010 - Syria has been a surprise. We had a full trip in Feb2010 and Sep2010. Due to the good responses, we are now taking bookings for 2011 trip. Note that the trip cost above is based on Sep 2010 airfares of Rm2380 +taxes Rm200. It will be adjusted once the actual cost is known. To confirm email nine times Yongoer Yazmi at yazmee@gmail.com or call 012 8071700. cancellations.

IMPORTANT NOTICE

This is meant to be a "free and easy" adventure trip. Participants should be relatively fit, with a good sense of humour, and above all, have the right attitude for close travel with others through possibly some trying times. Most definitely, this is not a trip for prudes, whiners, fuss-pots, and other similiarly assorted types! We had a couple of those before and it was not pleasant for us or them. Although every effort will be made to stick to the given itinerary, ground conditions may change and cause some disruption and/or deviation from the norm. Otherwise, have fun.



Palmyra's Roman City / Aleppo Souk

I have been to Syria two times on a personal trip and once in 2006 with a Yongo Group of 11 pax. I would rate it as one of the friendliest countries that I have visited. Breathtaking scenery, magnificent historical monuments and some the friendliest people in the world await the traveller, just as they have for centuries. Between explorations of majestic Roman archaeological ruins, such as Palmyra and Bosra, you wander the atmospheric alleyways and labyrinthine souqs or market of Damascus and Aleppo. You will be amazed by the great mix of both Muslim and Christian culture and sites.

We stay in budget hotels on twin-share basis with private bath. Its quite important participants be able to manage their own luggage and backpacks would be the preferred type of bag. As usual, you pay for your own meals, entrance fees and other activities. We hire a private bus to take us from Airport to Airport. There is good shopping in Syria. So do bring sufficient cash.

Day 0 KLIA: Assemble at KLIA **11PM 4 March 2011 Friday** (no need to take annual leave)

Day 1 Beirut Lebanon: Fly on 5 March 2011 Saturday on Emirates Airlines EK343 to Dubai at 210AM arriving 510AM (7hr). From Dubai, we fly EK957 to Beirut 730am arriving 915am (3.5hr). We have a full day visiting Beirut aka the Paris of the Middle East. Beirut is known for its modern buildings and one sees numerous American influences in its fast food chains and the American University. Overnight (ON) Beirut.

Day 2 Byblos & Qadisha Grottos: We begin the day visiting UNESCO listed Byblos and the Grottos of Qadisha. We return to Beirut for overnight stay.

Day 3 Baalbeck & Kracs des Chevaliers: We travel 4hr to visit Baalbeck, Lebanon's premier tourist site and a UNESCO site in the morning. We then cross the Lebanese/Syrian border and proceed to Krac de Chevalier. ON Kracs des Chevaliers.

Day 4 Ugarit Alphabets & Salah ad-Din Castle: In the morning we visit still intact Crusader's Castle. Described by TE Lawrence (of Arabia fame) as 'the finest Crusader's castle in the world', the Krak is one of Syria's premier attraction and a must-see.this. Then we drive on to Ugarit site, the origin of the world's earliest alphabets and muscial notes. The Ugaritic tablets found her is a greatly simplified system of 30 symbols, each of which represents one sound. We then move on to Saladdin Castle where we spend the night in a nearby hotel.

Day 5 Salah ad-Din Castle & Hama: We hop over to Qala'at Salah ad-Din Castle (Saladdin Castle), an ancient Crusader's Castle, second fiddle to Krak des Chevaliers but beautifully perched on top of a heavily wooded ridge with near-precipitous sides dropping away to surrounding ravines. Built by the Crusaders, control exchanged hands a couple of times before it was finally abandoned. Next stop is Apamea Roman City. We travel another 25km to Hama for our overnight stop.

Day 6 Sergilla Dead City & Aleppo: We spent the morning visiting the 20m giant water wheels called Norias in Hama. We then visit Sergilla, one of hundreds of Dead Cities, which were former Christian settlements producing wine before Muslim took over. Our final stop in this day is Aleppo where we will spend three nights.

Day 7 St Simeon Basilica Aleppo: We spend the most part of today visiting Locally known as Qala'at Samaan, this was a place of pilgrimage for Byzantine Christians. The Church today it is remarkably well preserved with Romanesque facade. ON Aleppo.



Krak des Chevaliers / Bosra Roman Amphitheatre

- Day 8 Aleppo's Old Market:** Unesco listed Aleppo vies with Damascus for the title of the world's oldest continually inhabited city. Today we spend the whole day wandering and getting "lost" in the huge Old City souk, sharing the narrow lanes with donkeys and little Suzuki vans. ON Aleppo.
- Day 9 Rasafa Walled City & Dier Ez Zur:** Our first stop is the abandoned town of Rasafa 2.5hr, which was a thriving site for Christian pilgrims. Three churches remain, the biggest being St Sergius Basilica. After that its 2hr to the town of Dier Ez Zur, a busy little market town by the historical Euphrates River. ON Dier Ez Zur.
- Day 10 Desert Castle & Palmyra:** We visit the 8th century Qasr Al-Heir Ash-Sharqi (aka East Wall Palace), an isolated castle in the middle of a desert that once held a strategic position on the Old Silk Route. Another 120km brings us to Palmyra, Syria's prime tourist attraction and one of the most well preserve ancient Roman City in the World. The town grew around the ruins which is just over 500m from the town centre. We will spend the rest of the day visiting this extensive site. ON Palmyra.
- Day 11 Damascus:** We travel 3hr to Damascus, the capital of Syria. 3hr, Syria's prime tourist attraction and one of the most well preserved ancient Roman city in the world (UNESCO). We will arrive with ample time to visit the Old Town.
- Day 12 Bosra Roman Theatre:** Its 4hours return trip to Bosra to visit one of the best preserved Roman theatre encompassed by an Arab fortress. This is a UNESCO listed site and was the last stop for Muslims on their way to Mecca. ON Damascus.
- Day 13 Home :** We have a last day to see more of the Old Town, a UNESCO site. Found in the old city is the Umayyad Mosque, in which is found the mausoleum of Saladin, the greatest Muslim conquerer as well as the shrine of John the Baptist aka the Dragon Slayer, said to contain the biblical character's head. We transfer to the Airport for EK914 flight at 450PM to Dubai arriving at 940PM.
- Day 14 Home :** From Dubai EK346 departs at 405AM arriving KLIA at **255PM on 18 Mar 2011 Friday.**



Souk in Aleppo / Destinations from Aleppo Bus Station

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

1. Cost cover group airfares, accomodation and travelling to sites mentioned above.
2. Accomodation will be in budget to mid-range hotels with private baths.
3. Not covered are airport taxes & fuel surcharges (currently Rm190), entrance fees (Rm300) and meals, say Rm50 per day x 13 days (Rm650).
4. Cost is subject to change depending on fluctuations in exchange rates and/or airfares.
5. A deposit of Rm1090 will be payable to confirm your place.

Email: yazmee@gmail.com or yongo123@gmail.com or rachelheng123@gmail.com

Phone: Lee Min: 016 220 9033 or 603 4023 8210

Phone: Yazmi 012 807 1700

Phone: Rachel 012 352 0868

Address: No 19 Lorong Air Bersih Tiga, Air Panas, 53200 Kuala Lumpur