

Voices OF THE LMT



درب الجبل اللبناني
LEBANON MOUNTAIN TRAIL

THE MAGAZINE OF THE
LEBANON MOUNTAIN
TRAIL ASSOCIATION

N°. 13 / MARCH 2025

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**PLAY IT, PROTECT IT!
NEW LMT BOARD GAME**

**TRAIL KNOWLEDGE SHARED:
EMPOWERING NEW PATHS**

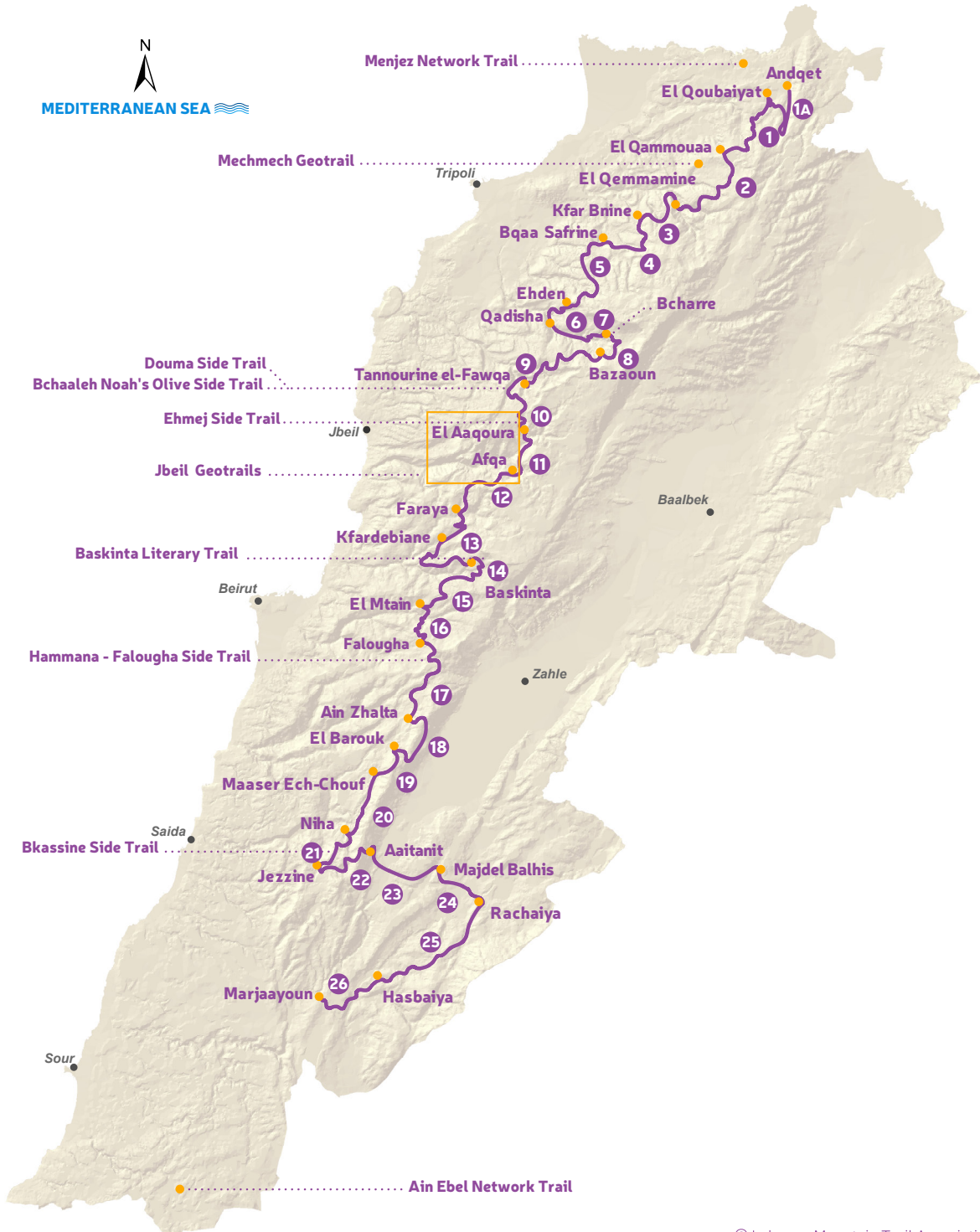
**RESEARCHING THE LMT:
DATA-DRIVEN INSIGHTS**

**BEYOND BORDERS: THE LMT'S
GLOBAL FOOTPRINT**

**MOU BETWEEN LMTA
AND FFR**



The Lebanon Mountain Trail





Alfred Farwagi
President

Regional Challenges, Local Strengths: Empowering the Future of the LMT

#HikeItProtectIt

President's Message

Last year brought with it a host of challenges that tested our resolve and adaptability. Yet, in the face of adversity, the Lebanon Mountain Trail (LMT) Association rose to the occasion. Across all our programs and initiatives, we not only met our goals—we made a lasting, meaningful impact on trail-side communities and helped elevate the LMT's role at the national level.

With every passing year since the LMT's inception, our Association has continued to build on its mission to protect, maintain and promote the trail, while staying rooted in the values that define the LMT spirit. With every transition of leadership, we have upheld our core principles of responsibility, sustainability, and legacy. This continuity has allowed us to grow stronger, while ensuring that the impact we make remains deeply connected to our founding mission.

In 2024, we took deliberate steps to ensure long-term stability and growth. Our board adopted a strategic framework that will guide us into the strategy development phase in 2025. The stability we have achieved goes beyond finances as it extends to our operational capacity. Today, we are better equipped to withstand unexpected shifts in funding, thanks to a more resilient structure. A key accomplishment was to successfully validate the transfer of operational responsibilities to the Executive Director, a necessary evolution that reinforces good governance and allows for sharper strategic focus by the board.

As our role evolves, so does our reach and responsibility. As the Association stepped up its involvement at national and regional levels, one of the most exciting developments of the year is our proud recognition as a founding member of the Mediterranean Trails Network. This partnership opens the door to valuable exchanges of knowledge, innovation & cross-border cooperation.

We are also proud of our collaboration with LIBNOR, the Lebanese Standards Institution which covers developing specifications and standards related to the planning, creation, management, and maintenance of hiking trails.

Perhaps most significantly, we made a major leap forward in realizing our long-held aspiration to establish an endowment fund for the conservation of the LMT. We established the groundwork for the LMT Foundation, a vital mechanism to ensure the long-term sustainability of our efforts. This foundation will not only secure our future financially but will also open new avenues for funding, support, and impact, hence ensuring that the LMT's legacy lives on for generations.

As you explore this publication and reflect on the year's highlights, I want to express my deepest gratitude to our members, volunteers, donors, staff, and partners. Your dedication, energy, and belief in our mission have carried us forward. Under the relentless drive and leadership of our Executive Director, Omar Sakr, the LMT Association continues to distinguish itself as a leader in trail conservation and development.

Looking back on a year defined by challenge & transformation, I am honored to have served the LMT family and to have contributed to a legacy that began 18 years ago—one that remains firmly committed to serving future generations.

Warm regards,
Alfred Farwagi
President



Omar Sakr
Executive Director

Charting New Paths: Resilience and Innovation on the Lebanon Mountain Trail

#HikeItProtectIt

Executive Director's Message

2024 presented Lebanon with a formidable array of challenges, testing our resilience on political, security, financial, economic, environmental, and social fronts. Yet, amidst this turbulent landscape, the Lebanon Mountain Trail Association remained committed to our core mission. We continued to maintain, conserve, manage, and advocate for the LMT, ensuring its accessibility and preservation for generations to come.

A critical component of our efforts during last year was extensive field research work covering the environmental, socio-cultural, and economic impact of the LMT. These in-depth studies have yielded invaluable scientific information, which we are now utilizing to refine and adapt the LMT Association's strategic direction, ensuring our actions are grounded in data and informed by a comprehensive understanding of the trail's multifaceted influence.

In a testament to our innovative spirit, 2024 saw the launch of the groundbreaking Geologic Trails in the high mountains of Jbeil. This initiative, a first of its kind, offers hikers a unique opportunity to appreciate and understand the rich geological tapestry woven into the very fabric of the LMT. It is a significant step towards deepening our connection with the natural world & enriching the hiking experience. Moreover, the LMT Association was delighted to partner with several NGO's to promote accessibility on the LMT for people with disabilities. As a result, hiking and running for persons with impaired vision is now a reality on the LMT, making our trail more inclusive and welcoming to all. Furthermore, a tremendous amount of work has been conducted to advance the development of Lebanese National Trails Standards. To that end, the LMT Association signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Fédération Française de la randonnée pédestre, enabling us to share expertise & know-how in trail development and management, hence paving the way for a more standardized and sustainable trail network across Lebanon.

Despite the challenging financial climate, marked by a significant decrease in funding for tourism projects in the country, our

Association has demonstrated remarkable adaptability. We have leveraged our expertise and begun sharing our experience in developing trails beyond the LMT. Currently, we are honored to contribute to the creation of a new 130 km Pilgrimage Trail dedicated to Saint Charbel, further diversifying Lebanon's tourism offerings and celebrating our cultural heritage.

This year also marked a milestone for the LMT Association on the global stage. We made our debut at ITB Berlin, showcasing the LMT as a world-class hiking destination to an international audience. Furthermore, our participation in the World Trails Network Conference in Ottawa, Canada provided a platform to highlight our latest achievements, including advancements in trail accessibility, the innovative Geologic Trails, and our impactful signature educational programs.

Looking ahead, we are excited to announce that in 2025, we will inaugurate a new Geologic Trail in the Akkar region and a new trail linking the Jabal Mousa Biosphere Reserve to the LMT, further expanding the trail's reach and enhancing the hiker experience. We are also committed to working closely with our service providers, including local guides and guesthouse owners, to improve the quality of the hiker experience along the LMT. Additionally, we will collaborate with camping site owners to develop and promote their services to the growing young generation of hikers, ensuring that the LMT remains accessible and appealing to all.

As we move forward, we remain committed to navigating these challenges with resilience & determination. The LMT Association will continue to be a driving force for sustainable tourism, environmental conservation, and community empowerment, ensuring that the Lebanon Mountain Trail remains a source of pride and inspiration for all.

Warm regards,
Omar Sakr
Executive Director

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Vision

The Lebanon Mountain Trail is a world-class, protected, sustainable, community-based natural corridor and tourism destination within Lebanon's lush landscape and rich cultural diversity.

Mission

The Lebanon Mountain Trail Association's mission is to conserve, manage, promote and advocate for the Lebanon Mountain Trail.

Values

- Environmental Stewardship
- Sustainability
- Inclusion & Diversity
- Collaboration
- Empowerment
- Respect & Integrity
- Commitment
- Celebration of Culture

HIKE IT.
PROTECT IT.
مشي لتحمي



LMTA at The World Trails Network Conference in Ottawa

Julie Lebnan
LMTA Program Administrator



Imagine a place where 400 people, all passionate about nature and the great outdoors, come together to share their love for trails. This vision became a reality at the World Trails Network Conference, held in Ottawa from September 30th to October 3rd, 2024.

"A holistic perspective on trails, recognizing the intricate web of connections that shape them."

The World Trails Conference is a global forum held every two years bringing together representatives from trails around the world to learn from experts, build connections, and shape the future of trail experiences. The 2024 theme, "Connection to People, Places, and the Planet," encouraged attendees to take a holistic perspective on trails by recognizing the intricate web of connections that shape them.

The conference was co-organized by the WTN and the Trans Canada Trail.

Lebanon Mountain Trail Makes a Mark

The Lebanon Mountain Trail Association (LMTA) was well-represented at the conference with a delegation of five members: Omar Sakr (Executive Director), Takla Khoueiry (Community and Education Coordinator), Kevin Boueiri (LMT Ambassador to the USA), Julie Lebnan (Program Administrator) and Wafa el Osta (former LMT Ambassador to Canada and CFLMT board member).

The LMTA, despite its relatively small size, demonstrated impressive engagement, not only through its significant representation but also by delivering four presentations at the conference.

Conference Themes and LMTA contributions

The conference program explored three main themes:

Climate and Nature: This theme highlighted how trails can support conservation and climate action.

Takla Khoueiry (LMTA) co-facilitated a workshop on "Learning from Educational Successes – Stories of Emerging Youth Trail Stewards," sharing inspiring stories of young community leaders from LMTA's education program.

Regenerative Tourism: Sessions focused on tourism's power to revitalize communities.

Anthropologist Kevin Boueiri, LMT Ambassador to the USA, captivated an audience of 400 with his presentation on long-distance hiking as a peace-building tool. His 15-month ethnographic fieldwork on the Lebanon Mountain Trail (LMT), explored in his dissertation "Trail of Dreams: Journeys of Belonging on the LMT," delved into how hiking shapes national and cultural identity among Lebanese hikers.

Omar Sakr (LMTA Executive Director) showcased the LMT Geotrails initiative and the potential for a geopark in Lebanon, emphasizing a human-centered approach to regenerative tourism.

Resilient Trails Sector: Julie Lebnan presented the LMTA's leading accessibility initiative during a session entitled "Inclusive Paths Ahead: Advancing Accessibility on Trails Around the World."

LMTA representatives were honored to have H.E. Fadi Ziadeh, Ambassador of Lebanon to Canada, attending this session. His presence highlighted the importance of the LMTA's work and demonstrated his support for the association's leading efforts.

Another key highlight was the presentation on the Med Trails Network (MTN) initiative by Omar Sakr and Julie Lebnan. This initiative aims to establish the MTN as the new Mediterranean Hub within the World Trails Network, attracting new members to bolster trail organizations and foster the development of trails and trail tourism throughout the Mediterranean region.

The session, co-facilitated by Martina Sedlakova and Fivos Tsaravopoulos (Paths of Greece), generated rich discussion and was attended by participants from the Mediterranean region, North America, and Asia.

Beyond the formal sessions, the conference offered a diverse range of activities. Participants had the opportunity to join a half-day walking tour of Ottawa, exploring the city's trails and learning about the vital role of volunteerism in their maintenance and preservation. The tour also highlighted the delicate balance between conservation, recreation, and historical significance.

The conference concluded with a festive evening at the Canadian Museum of History. The event featured indigenous musicians and dancers and a keynote address by renowned filmmaker and adventurer Dianne Whelan, who captivated the audience with stories from her 24,000 km trek across the Trans Canada Trail.

A Valuable Experience for LMTA

The World Trail Network conference provided a dynamic stage for the LMTA to not only showcase its groundbreaking work but also for its participants to network, learn, and collaborate with the WTN community. The WTN's work continues beyond the conference.

You can become a WTN member (<https://worldtrailsnetwork.org/become-a-member/>), join one of the dedicated taskforces and become part of a global community of hiking enthusiasts.

You can also find here (<https://worldtrailsnetwork.org/get-involved>) how you can get involved with the WTN.



First Geological Trails in Lebanon by LMTA in the High Mountains of Jbeil

Lara Kallas

Project Manager, UNDP, Land Degradation Neutrality for Mountain Landscapes project



The mountains of Jbeil are home to unique geological formations and features representing the diversity of Lebanon's landscape. These include geological formations and processes that offer valuable insights into Earth's history and evolution.

A groundbreaking project has thus emerged 'The Jbeil Geologic Trail', merging sustainable tourism with the rich geological heritage of the region.

The initiative was driven by the convergence of various studies under the Land Degradation Neutrality for mountain landscapes (LDN) project implemented by UNDP in partnership with the Ministry of Environment and with funds from the Global Environment Facility (GEF). These studies include the Sustainable Tourism Strategy for the mountains of Lebanon (UNDP, 2022), the Tourism Master Plan of the Jbeil Mountains (UNDP, 2022) and the Master Plan for the mountains of Jbeil (UNDP, 2023) district which all recognized the geotourism potential of the area.

The Vision Behind the Trail

The Jbeil Geologic Trail's conception is not merely about creating a path through the mountains; it embodies a vision of sustainable tourism that prioritizes education, conservation, and community engagement. By weaving together education and geotourism, the trail will foster a deeper understanding of Earth's geological history, & the spectacular landscapes shaped over millions of years in Lebanon. It also promises to enhance regional development while conserving the environment and benefiting local communities.

UNDP partnered with the Lebanon Mountain Trail Association (LMTA) to design, develop and promote this ambitious project in collaboration with local authorities and the American University of Beirut's department of Earth Sciences. Linking this new trail to the Lebanon Mountain Trail was a strategic decision to ensure the sustainability of the project.

Trail Features and Unique Offerings

The 50-kilometer geologic trail is linked to the existing LMT and is divided into five sections, offering visitors a comprehensive experience of the region's geological wonders.

- **Rest Areas with Interpretive Panels:** Strategically placed along the route, three rest areas provide visitors with comfortable spaces to relax and take in the stunning views of the surrounding mountains. The interpretive panels enhance the visitor experience by offering detailed explanations of the geological processes that have shaped the landscape and their implications for the local environment and communities.
- **Informative Panels:** Five informational panels are installed along the trail at the start of each section, providing crucial insights into the geological features, ecological significance, and cultural heritage of the area.
- **Interactive Technology:** A unique aspect of the trail is the inclusion of 56 QR code signs linked to geosites along the trail. These codes offer visitors interactive access to detailed information about each site's geological significance through their smartphones, enhancing the educational experience.

Empowering Local Communities

One of the primary objectives of this project which was officially launched in December 2023 is to empower local communities by driving sustainable rural and nature-based tourism activities.

To this end, 12 experienced guides were selected from the local communities and underwent a comprehensive geology training programme led by geology and rural tourism experts.

By leveraging Jbeil's unique geological heritage the LMT Jbeil Geologic Trail offers innovative tourism products that enrich the visitor experience and generate economic opportunities for local communities. The clustering of tourism services and activities, supported by the trail, is expected to catalyze local businesses, provide job opportunities, and promote cultural exchange.

Conclusion

In summary, the new geologic trail in the Jbeil district of Lebanon represents a significant step towards integrating sustainable tourism with the preservation of the region's geological heritage. By fostering education, supporting local communities, and minimizing environmental impact, this project is set to redefine the tourism landscape in Lebanon.

As visitors explore the breathtaking natural beauty & geological wonders of the Jbeil Mountains, they will gain a profound appreciation for Earth's history & the crucial role we play in its stewardship. The Jbeil Geologic Trail not only offers a unique adventure; it also embodies a commitment to sustainability and community empowerment that will resonate for generations to come.



"Seeking Judhuri" (My Roots) Made it to the WTN Film Festival

Jay Simpson
World Trails Film Festival Director



Trail enthusiasts and audiences of the World Trails Film Festival will return to Lebanon through the short film 'Seeking Judhuri', directed by filmmaker Whitney Hassett, which follows the transformative story of Ahmad Hijazi and his father hiking together on the Lebanon Mountain Trail.

Ahmad, a first-generation Lebanese-American, embarks on the challenging Lebanon Mountain Trail, and invites his father, who fled during the civil war, on a symbolic journey as they collectively face cultural wounds, rediscover their connection to the land, and revive the inherent bond between the Lebanese people and the outdoors, scarred by the lingering impact of war. At the heart of Seeking Judhuri, Ahmad's story is a story of homecoming and an odyssey to find connection to one's roots. It is also a story of rite of passage, a father-son journey as a son learns to take care of his father. Through beautiful cinematography of the landscapes of Lebanon and intimate scenes from walking the LMT, viewers see the beautiful tapestry of diversity and challenges that provide profound experiences for hikers.

For the second program series in a row, the World Trails Film Festival continues to share stories from the Lebanon Mountain Trail in global film screening events. Trails Film's previous program line-up that premiered in 2022 at the World Trails Conference in Skiathos, Greece included Confessions of a Runner by Bachar Khattar, which also won the 2022 'Emerging Filmmaker' award. By including 'Seeking Judhuri' in our 2024 program from Ottawa, Canada, audiences of the world will continue to learn of the incredible experiences from the LMT. The festival presented Seeking Judhuri in our evening program to an audience of over 200 attendees in Ottawa. Immediately after the World Trails Conference, Trails Film and the Bruce Trails Conservancy co-hosted three screenings of Seeking Judhuri and other films at well-attended events across Ontario.



Trails Film: With this film you are able to share your story with audiences around the entire globe -- what do you hope they walk away with after viewing?

Ahmad: My hope is that people come away with a sense of curiosity about their own cultural backgrounds, just as I've learned to appreciate mine. I want them to see that Lebanon is so much more than what the news often shows—it's a country of incredible beauty, diversity, and history, with landscapes that range from mountains to coastlines. On a personal level, I hope viewers understand the emotional journey of immigrants trying to hold onto their identity, as I take my father back to our ancestral lands to reconnect with our roots, away from the distractions of everyday life. I also want Lebanese people to walk away with a new perspective on their own country, seeing the beauty and significance in their own backyard that they might have overlooked before.

Trails Film: I know this might be too early to ask, but what responses have you heard from other Lebanese who have seen your film or heard your story?

Ahmad: So far, the film has only been shown to a fairly narrow audience, but whenever I've personally shared it with people I know, the response has been overwhelmingly positive & warm. That being said, given the current climate in Lebanon & the challenges the country has faced, it's been tough to feel fully confident about sharing it more broadly without some hesitation.

Trails Film: What have you heard from folks who are not Lebanese?

Ahmad: Many people are really struck by the landscape and the sheer depth of history packed into such a small country, which often leaves them in awe. There's also a lot of curiosity around the political situation and how it has affected both the community and my family personally. It's been eye-opening to see how the film sparks these kinds of conversations and brings people to reflect on the bigger picture.

Trails Film: This film is so much about roots and family -- how has this experience continued to impact your father and you?

Ahmad: This experience has been one of the most incredible we've had together, and I'd say it's truly formative for both of us. For me, it felt like a symbolic way of stepping into adulthood. In many ways, it was as if I was taking care of my father, guiding him back to our ancestral roots. It marked the end of my childhood, and walking away from the experience, I felt like I had entered a new chapter of my life. Regardless of how big or small this film becomes, both my father and I feel incredibly blessed to have shared such a meaningful journey. We'll always cherish the memories we created together, and the film itself is a treasure. At the end of it all, we simply feel lucky—lucky for our culture, our heritage, our relationship, and for having had the opportunity to embark on this journey together.

Trails Film: What was your experience of seeing and crossing the Lebanon Mountain Trail?

Whitney: The LMT is such a fascinating trail in that you truly experience the heart of Lebanon, walking through people's backyards, eating in their homes, and seeing such a diversity of landscapes, from valleys, canyons, peaks and ruins. I was most struck by how the Lebanese have been through such social and economic turmoil, but their warmth and generosity and resilience is nothing I've experienced. Even though I only joined Ahmad for a week on the trail, I felt a deep connection to the place and its people and it's an experience that has stayed with me.

Trails Film: What do you think you've learned through this experience?

Whitney: That even despite difficult economic or social circumstances; that people can still hold so much hope for a better future and work so hard to get there. The LMT is such a positive force that I feel can really make a difference in a region with enough support.

Trails Film: What is your hope in sharing this film with audiences around the world?

Whitney: Lebanon is a place that many people are unfamiliar with, and I believe this film can share a glimpse into a part of the world that is often misunderstood or overlooked. I hope to spark curiosity and a sense of shared humanity.

For more information about Seeking Judhuri and opportunities to view the film, please visit the World Trails Film Festival website at www.trails.film

Sounds of the Trails Against all Odds

Joumana Brihi

LMT Vice President, Head of the Communication Committee



Let the voices of our peaceful birds be heard with every footstep taken on the LMT

Since 2015, the Lebanon Mountain Trail Association (LMTA) has remained steadfast in our commitment to bringing our Thru Hike and Fall Trek events to our community and to hikers from Lebanon and around the world.

Regardless of the challenges we face, our mission is to ensure that each one of you can revel in the beauty of our country's stunning trails. In 2024, as Lebanon grappled with a series of compounded crises—including a war that erupted in the south and spread across the nation—we once again chose resilience over despair. We launched two weekend treks on April 13-14 and April 21-22, followed by a longer journey from April 26 to May 5.

Three regions, 13 sections

The planning allowed our hikers to explore 13 sections of our wonderful Lebanon Mountain Trail. In the Chouf, they hiked from from Maaser el Chouf to Barouk and Ain Zhalta; in Mount Lebanon from Falougha, to El Mtain and Baskinta; and finally in Keserwan and the North of Lebanon from Faraya to Afqa, Douma, Tannourine, Bazou, Bcharreh, Qozhaya and Horsh Ehden. Throughout, we elevated our senses to remain mindful of the wonderful sounds of the trail, the whispers of the wind, the rustling leaves, and the calls of the vibrant fauna and flora. We tried to share this with all those that could not join us through our social media storytelling and daily coverage of the hikes. This journey brought a renewed sense of hope to our local communities, to our team and to our LMTA community of hikers at a time when it was much needed.

A new vision for engaging events and activities

Not only did we honor our annual spring tradition, but we also unveiled a new vision dedicated to organizing engaging activities & smaller events following our hikes, whenever time & energy permitted! In collaboration with various organizations, the LMTA brought unique experiences to our hikers. During the first weekend, The Association for Bird Conservation in Lebanon delivered an insightful presentation on the challenges of protecting migrating birds from hunting and other threats, while also promoting birdwatching activities available in the country's reserves. On the second weekend, participants enjoyed a traditional soap-making workshop, a craft that has recently experienced a delightful revival in Lebanon. In the final stretch, hikers got to know Wata Cider: a brand that emerged in Lebanon in recent years, transforming surplus apple production into innovative cider, thereby creating jobs and stimulating the local economy.

Through these collective experiences, we were not only able to nurture our love of nature but also to strengthen the bonds within our community.

Together, we continue to walk the trails of hope, resilience, and unity, ensuring that the sounds of our beloved mountains echo for generations to come.

" Last spring, I embarked on a two-day hiking trip with LMTA, my first ever. It took us through two sections of the Lebanon Mountain Trail spanning the area from Faraya to Aqoura (Sections 12/11).

I approached the excursion with much anticipation and few expectations. Having previously been on innumerable hikes, to me it was not a complete shot in the dark. Nature in Lebanon rarely disappoints, particularly in the spring season. Holding off then any cognitive interference on my part leaves the door wide open for surprises and spontaneity. In addition to hiking in pristine mountain areas, the hike offered us an opportunity to enjoy other aspects; be it the hospitality of a rural guesthouse, the horticulture of a vineyard, the spirituality of an overnight stay in a monastery, the exposure to archeological richness, the educational introduction to the mountains' flora by the LMTA guides, the appreciation of economic benefits to rural communities from such endeavors, or the possibility of fostering connections and nurturing new friendships.

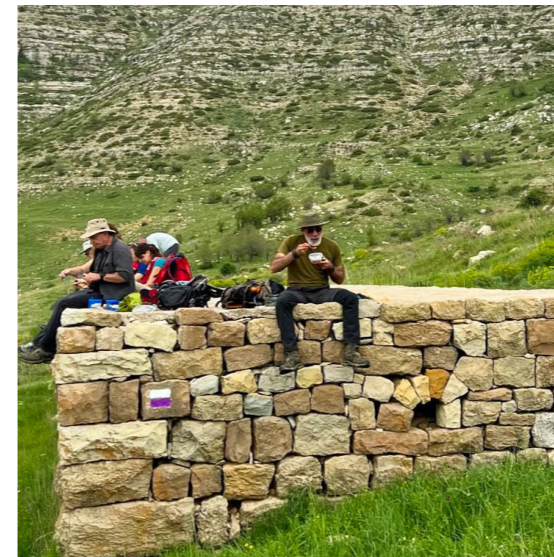
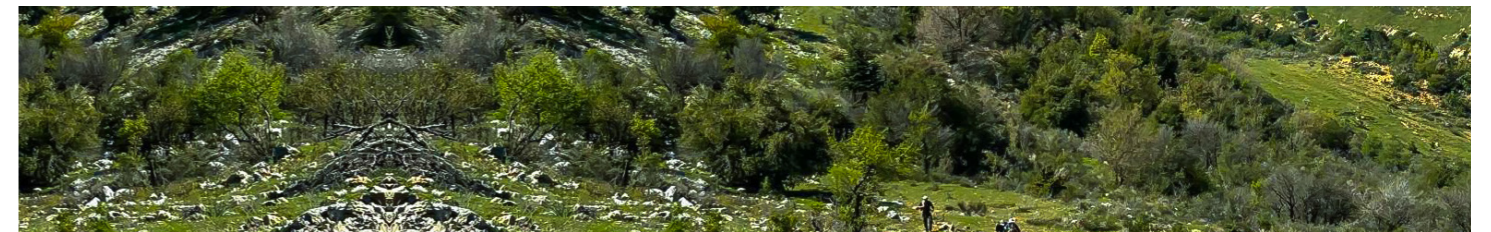
The highlight was however not only the beautiful and colorful scenery along the way but also the superb spring weather. The crispy air gives way to a gentle breeze that permeates your skin to reach your heart and soul and awaken a feeling of euphoria experienced by like-minded hikers and expressed with unspoken words.."

- Hoda Hallak



" In the Spring of 2024, I was fortunate to spend 5 days hiking the northern Lebanese mountains on the Lebanon Mountain Trail. I saw natural beauty that I have not seen in my hikes over a lifetime. I met people in small towns guest houses and monasteries that welcomed us like family and served us food made with local ingredients. I met people during the hikes who will sure become lifelong friends. We hiked 8-16 miles every day with elevation changes of 3-4 thousand feet. We had sunny days and got hit with thunderstorms and heavy rain. I am thankful to the team that makes up the LMT... you are special people bringing the best out of Lebanon. I can't wait to do this again."

- Hassan Dandashly



القسم ٢٦ مرجعيون الى حاصبيا

كريستيان أخرس
مدير الدرب في جمعية درب الجبل اللبناني

انه بداية و نهاية درب الجبل اللبناني في الجنوب.



ينطلق المسار من ساحة جديدة مرجعيون عند اللوحة التوجيهية و ينصرف نحو مبنى البلدية لكنه يعود و ينزل يسارا نحو طريق موازي للطريق العام ليعود و يلتقي معها قرب مئذنة دتين. نتابع سيرنا على الأقدام داخل دبين بعد ترك الطريق العام و نكمل نحو محطة المياه مروراً بأحد المخيمات. ثم نقطع طريق عام مرجعيون ابل السقي، لندخل ابل السقي من خلال طريق ترابي محاطة بسهول القمح و مزروعات اخرى حتى نصل الى داخل القرية. نكمل سيرنا على الأقدام داخل القرية حيث نصب تذكاري لفاندي وصولاً الى بيت الفلاح الذي يضم أدوات زراعية قديمة و ثياب تقليدية و مركز حرفي. و قرب البيت توجد بركة المياه عند موقع مراقبة الطيور، فهذه الغابة تعتبر احد اهم المواقع لمرور الطيور المهاجرة. الموقع يشرف على جبل حرمون و قرى اخرى اضافة الى مناطق حاصبيا و مجرى نهر الحاصباني.



نتابع تقدمنا نزولاً داخل الحمى و هي غابة صنوبر كثيفة. يمر مسار درب الجبل اللبناني في هذه الغابة على طريق اجر وصولاً الى السوق الجديد وسوق الخان مروراً على طريق شبعاً كوكبا لنكمل من بعده و نقطع نهر الحاصباني فوق خرسانات اسمنتية لنصل الى الضفة الأخرى. ينبع هذا النهر من لبنان و طوله حوالي 40 كلم، نتابع صعوداً على طريق ترابي من ثم نزل تجاه طريق اسفلت لنعود و ننصرف صعوداً نحو قرية صغيرة وهي ابو قمحة. على المسار مباشرة نمر قرب عين الضيقة و اشجار زيتون دهرمي كما يمكننا ان نشاهد صخرة عليها آثار حواضر يدعي السكان انها آثار لاقدم حمان مار جورجيوس. نتابع و ندخل حمى حاصبيا فينصرف الدرب مصعوداً متعرجاً داخل غابة السنديان لنصل عبر طريق ترابي الى داخل حاصبيا و نختم المسير عند القلعة الشهابية.

يعتبر هذا القسم من المسارات المتوسطة الصعوبة و يمكن لأي شخص لديه المؤهلات البدنية ان يسلك هذا المسار دون صعوبة



LMT | Section 17

درب الجبل اللبناني | قسم ١٧

عين زحلتا
Ain Zhalta

12.3 km / 4h20

2.7 km / 1h

LMT | Section 17

درب الجبل اللبناني | قسم ١٧

فالوغا
Falougha

**TRAIL &
CONSERVATION**

درب مار شربل

يوسف كمال الحاج منسق مشروع درب مار شربل



إنّ "درب مار شربل" مشروع مميّز تشرف على تنفيذه جمعية "درب السما- مؤسّسة الخوري سيمون الزند"، وتشارك في تأهيله، تقنيًا، "جمعية درب الجبل اللبناني" بموجب اتفاقية تعاون بين الجمعيتين.

إنّه أول درب حجّ عالمي على الأقدام، طويل المسافة، عبر طبيعة لبنان الخضراء. مسافته الإجمالية التقريبية 130 كلم، وهو مجرّأ إلى مسارين: شماليّ ورمزه A (من دير مار أنطونيوس-قزحيا إلى دير مار مارون-عنايا)، وجنوبيّ ورمزه B (من جوار الكرسيّ البطريركيّ في بركي إلى دير مار مارون-عنايا). مع اعتماد قبر القديس شربل في عنايا نقطة جذب أساسية للمسارين.

أطلقت فكرة المشروع إلى العلن في 1 تشرين الثاني 2023، وبعد نجاح حملة جمع التبرّعات لصالحه بشكل باهر، بوشرت أعمال التأهيل على الأرض ابتداء من 1 حزيران 2024. سيكون في مقدور الحجاج عليه (أو حتّى المرتحلين بدون هدف روحيّ)، من جميع الطوائف ومن أربعة أقطار العالم، أن يقطعوا سيرا على الأقدام، كتّيا أو جزئيّا، مسارات مؤهّلة بحسب المعايير الدولية، وسيطوفون عبر أماكن عاش مار شربل في كنفها على مدّ حياته الأرضية: موطنه الأصليّ، مهد إلهامه الروحيّ، مدرسة الابتداء، مكان رسامته، المقام الذي أمضى فيه حياته الدنيويّة والنسكيّة، وغيرها.

من الضروريّ أن نشير إلى أنّ هدف "الدرب" ليس أن يكون مجرّد مسار رياضيّ لجوّالة المسافات الطويلة، وإن كان هؤلاء على الربح والسعة. الغاية المنشودة هي أن يكون منبع ثراء روحيّ لمستكشفيه، وشاهدا حيّا على طبيعة لبنان الخلّابة وثقافته الفياضة، فضلا عن كونه أداة فعّالة لتنمية لبنان تنمية مستدامة. يقيننا أنّ هذا "الدرب"، الصديق للبيئة، سيكون، من جهة، إرثا مستديفا ومشرفا نتركه لأبنائنا وأحفادنا، كما أنّه، من جهة أخرى، سيعود بأجلز النفع على القرى والجماعات المتاخمة له. فتأهيله اليوم، وغدا خدمات المبيت والطعام والنقلات، وأعمال الصيانة، والإرشاد السياحيّ، ستتوقّف بشكل رئيسيّ بهمة السكّان الأصليين، وهذا خير حلّ مستدام لهم يتيح تأطّلهم المديد في منازلهم وتقاليدهم العريقة.



بحسب روزنامة التنفيذ التي وضعها القيّمون على المشروع، وإذا سمحت الظروف المأسويّة الحالية بذلك، سينجز أوّل جزء من المسار الشماليّ في آخر كانون الثاني 2025، وستطلق مسارات حجّ تجريبية عليه. وفي النصف الثاني من تموز 2025 يؤمل إنجاز تأهيل المسار الشماليّ بكامله (قزحيا-عنايا)، فإطلاق الحجّ عليه رسميًا، وذلك كبادرة إكرام لقرار الكرسيّ الرسوليّ القاضي بإعلان عام 2025 سنة حجّ يوبيلية بعنوان "حجاج الرجاء". أمّا إنجاز تأهيل الدرب كتّيا، بمساربه، فمخطّط له في النصف الثاني من تموز 2026.

"درب مار شربل": علامة رجاء عظيمة في ليل لبنان ستسمح لنا قريبًا، في ظلّ شفيح هذه "الأرض المقدّسة"، من الانطلاق معه، وعلى خطاه، في مسيرة نعيمية سلامية نحو شمس الله.



تدريب الأدلة المحليين على درب مشمش الجيولوجي عكار

خالد طالب
مؤسس فريق إطفاء درب عكار

خلال الاجتماع الأول لي مع فريق عمل برنامج تحديد تدهور الأراضي LDN وجمعية درب الجبل اللبناني وعدد من الخبراء حول الدروب الجيولوجية في لبنان، كُنت متحمساً جداً، حملت معي حينها كل ما في جعبتي عن الجيولوجيا في عكار، وأنا أعلم أنّ ما سنقدم عليه هي فكرة طموحة بإمكانها فتح الآفاق ووضع حجر الأساس لدرب طويل ربما يصبح معه لبنان بأكمله منتزهاً جيولوجياً، وربما ان يكون له حتى متحفه للتاريخ الطبيعي!



ومن يعرفني يعرف مقدار عشقي لجيولوجيا لبنان هائلة التنوع نسبة لمساحته الصغيرة والضاربة في القدم الى ما يزيد عن 180 مليون سنة، ورغبتني العميقة في ان يتعرف السائرون على دروب المشي الجبلية على هذه الكنوز الطبيعية. لا أخفي انني وقعت في الحيرة الشديدة حين طلب مني اقتراح أحد الدروب ليكون درباً جيولوجياً لعكار، من بين شبكة دروب تمتد لعشرات الكيلومترات على درب الجبل اللبناني او بالقرب منه. كان الأمر صعباً.

انقضت حوالي الشهر في تنفيذ الدرب وتحضيره ليكون درباً مناسباً وآمناً، ولكن ما فاق توقعاتي هو مقدار ما شاهدناه وتعرفنا من تنوع عليه لم نكن على علم به، نحن الذين سرنا على نفس الدرب مراراً وتكراراً، ولم يكن ذلك ليحدث لولا الشرح المميز من الـ د. جوانا دمر التي تولت مع فريقها من قسم علوم الأرض في الجامعة الأميركية في بيروت، تدريب فريق المرشدين واثراء معرفتهم بالمعلومات القيمة والغنية.

كان التدريب الميداني والسير على الدرب الجيولوجي تجربة مميزة جداً. إنه اشبه بركوب سفينة الزمن والعودة الى زمن عاشت فيه الديناصورات والكائنات المنقرضة، بإمكانك التخيل كيف تشكل الوادي، كيف أثرت الزلازل في مجرى النهر، كيف خرجت الينابيع من باطن الجبل، وكيف تشكلت التكوينات الكارستية. صار لك تلك الأسئلة أجوبة وصارت لها قصص نرويها كمرشدين الى كل رواد هذا الدرب.

اليوم، ينضم درب مشمش عكار الجيولوجي البالغ طوله حوالي 4 كلم الى عائلة درب الجبل اللبناني ليس كدرب فحسب، انما كرحلة ضاربة في الزمن، ننقب في تلك الرحلة عن كنوز لبنان الطبيعية وتتعلم أكثر فأكثر عن هذا البلد الذي لا نريد ان يأتي يوماً نقول فيه اننا لا نستحقه.

تطوير وتأهيل مسارات وادي قاديشا

رشاد صقر
مدير المشاريع والعمليات في جمعية درب الجبل اللبناني

ضمن إطار نشاطاتها في مجال السياحة البيئية المستدامة وفي قطاع مسارات المشي الجبلي، تساهم جمعية درب الجبل اللبناني في عملية تطوير وتأهيل مسارات وادي قاديشا، وذلك ضمن مشروع "قاديشا المستدام" Qadisha Durable



إنّ مشروع "قاديشا المستدام" ممّول من عدّة جهات فرنسية وتشرف على تنفيذه جمعية Tetraktys الفرنسية بالتعاون مع اتحادي بلديات بشري وزغرتا، وهو يهدف الى تعزيز القطاع السياحي وذلك عبر وضع استراتيجيية لوادي قاديشا وإنشاء علامة تجارية سياحية وتطوير دروب للمشبي في قلب الوادي وفي القرى المحيطة به.

إن دروب المشبي في قاديشا كانت عبر التاريخ، وما زالت، الوسيلة الوحيدة للوصول الى اعماق الوادي المقدّس المدرج على لائحة الاونيسكو للتراث العالمي، لما يكتنزه من ثروات تاريخية، دينية، ثقافية وطبيعية.

لما كانت جمعية درب الجبل اللبناني تملك الخبرة الطويلة في تطوير وإدارة مسارات المشبي الجبلي، وأولها "درب الجبل اللبناني" الممتد على مسافة 600 كلم من شمال لبنان الى جنوبه، قرّرت جمعية Tetraktys التعاون معها ضمن مشروع "قاديشا المستدام".

عقدت الجمعيتان عدة اجتماعات حضرها خبراء فرنسيون ولبنانيون في مجالات السياحة المستدامة والدروب الجبلية والتواصل والتسويق، ووضعنا خطة عمل. تشمل الخطة أولاً إعداد جدول بمسارات الوادي ودراسة مدى فلاءمتها للسياحة البيئية وحاجتها للتأهيل والتطوير، وقد شارفت هذه المرحلة على الانتهاء. سوف تليها مرحلة التأهيل الفعلي لهذه الدروب ضمن مواصفات عالمية وبحسب الموجبات المرتبطة بمواقع الأونيسكو للتراث العالمي. ستجري هذه الاعمال بإشراف جمعية درب الجبل وبالتنسيق مع السلطات البلدية والجهات المحلية المعنية، على يد شابات وشبان من القرى المنتشرة حول الوادي.



**COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT**

Impaired Vision Hikers on the LMT with Equal NGO

Marie Gabriel
Vice President, EQUAL NGO



Imagine the morning sun warming your skin as you step into Barouk Reserve. Close your eyes and let the scene unfold—the hum of voices around you, the earthy scent of cedar trees, the feel of wild thyme brushing against your fingertips. This is where a group of visually impaired hikers, accompanied by EQUAL and the Lebanese Mountain Trail Association (LMTA), gathered to embark on a journey that went far beyond the physical path.

As the bus filled with lively conversation and laughter, it became clear that this wasn't just any hike. The visually impaired participants were filled with excitement, some mingled with a hint of nervousness.

Arriving at the Monkey Farm, the group settled in for a refreshing lavender-infused beverage and figs with sesame paste, their aromas wafting through the air and sparking energy and anticipation. With new friends by their side, they were ready to experience nature in a way they'd never imagined.

At the trailhead, the LMTA guides introduced a special setup: a directional bar designed to support each visually impaired hiker between two sighted guides. With the guides holding each end and the hiker securely fastened to the bar in the center, the hikers could experience the trail independently, moving with confidence. This simple system offered a remarkable freedom, allowing everyone to focus not on limitations but on the journey ahead.

With each step, the LMTA guides narrated the landscape around them, describing the colors of wildflowers, the sun filtering through trees branches. They shared the thrill of the natural world through words, bringing the scene to life and inviting the hikers into an immersive experience. But they didn't stop there—they invited each hiker to get close to the earth, teaching them to identify thyme, sage, and wild oregano by touch and smell. As fingers brushed the soil and scents filled the air, even those who were initially hesitant found themselves deeply engaged, drawn into a connection with the land that transcended sight.

Pausing along the trail, the group encountered donkeys and sheep, each animal a chance for tactile discovery. For many,

it was a first—a unique sensory experience that filled the hike with warmth and joy. As hands brushed against woolly coats and gentle muzzles, the bonds between hikers and guides deepened, woven through shared laughter and the simple pleasure of connection.

By the time they reached the farm for lunch, there was a feeling of celebration in the air. Plates of traditional Lebanese food were passed around, and everyone dug in, sharing not just a meal but stories, dreams, and contact information. The visually impaired hikers left with a new sense of empowerment, having realized that the directional bars allowed them to navigate independently, to touch and smell their surroundings in ways that brought nature alive. The sighted guides, in turn, gained a new perspective, realizing that their companions' courage and resilience made visual impairment simply one facet of a deeply capable and independent person.

The experience was a testament to teamwork and the magic of inclusion. A special thank you goes to the LMTA team, whose skill, patience, and attentiveness turned the hike into a safe and inspiring experience. Thanks also to the generous owner of the Monkey Farm for hosting us in such a welcoming way, and to the Farmville staff who treated us to a delicious, soul-warming meal that brought us all together.

As you imagine this journey, the feel of soil beneath your hands, the scent of wild herbs, and the sound of laughter in the air, consider this: in a world quick to make assumptions about ability, what can each of us do to help break down barriers? How can we share the courage and determination of the visually impaired, ensuring their independence and resilience are understood and celebrated?

Scouts du Liban MOOT 2024 & LMTA Empowering Youth Through Scouting: A Transformative Experience

Scouts du Liban Team

On May 25-26, 2024, more than 500 Rovers young men aged 17 to 23 from our scouting movement, Les Scouts du Liban, embarked on an inspiring journey during a major scout assembly, MOOT, in Taanayel. This event was not just a gathering but an opportunity for these young individuals to engage in meaningful work, develop essential skills, and contribute to a greater cause.

On May 25-26, 2024, more than 500 Rovers young men aged 17 to 23 from our scouting movement, Les Scouts du Liban, embarked on an inspiring journey during a major scout assembly, MOOT, in Taanayel. This event was not just a gathering but an opportunity for these young individuals to engage in meaningful work, develop essential skills & contribute to a greater cause.

The first phase of the assembly focused on enhancing the facilities of a large farm, where our rovers worked collaboratively to improve the space. They took on various renovation tasks, including restoring the museum, trimming trees, repainting benches, and refurbishing different areas to uplift the farm's image. Throughout this hands-on experience, they learned valuable farming techniques, environmental conservation methods, and teamwork, fostering a strong sense of responsibility and dedication to community service.

The second part of the event was dedicated to learning and skill development. The rovers visited multiple booths organized by specialized associations, each offering unique insights and training. They explored topics such as spiritual growth, drug awareness, manual skill development, pottery, first aid techniques, and

anti-corruption education. One of the most impactful experiences was their engagement with the Lebanon Mountain Trail Association (LMTA).

The session began with LMTA sharing its mission with the rovers and providing details about the LMTA trails, which scouts regularly cross during their camps. Then the rovers received special training on how to assist individuals with disabilities in enjoying nature trails. They were introduced to the Joëlette, a specially designed wheelchair that makes outdoor adventures accessible to all, regardless of age or physical ability. Omar Chaiban, a Rover Chief, reflected on the session, saying: "The LMTA experience was a great one. The LMTA approach aligns perfectly with our scout values, and we're looking to mobilize our efforts to bring their innovative solution to the field."

This scout assembly proved a transformative experience for participating youth, equipping them with practical skills, fostering a spirit of service, and broadening their cultural & humanitarian awareness. By combining hands-on work with valuable educational sessions, the event successfully reinforced the core values of scouting: teamwork, inclusivity & community empowerment.



Impaired Vision Runners on the LMT

with 4 Seasons Mountain Trail and Blind with Vision NGO

Ali Kedami, Neda Stevenson, Carlos Arkhondis, Monique Chaaya, Toufic Shayboub, Nayla Cortas and Joseph Iskandar
4 Seasons Mountain Trail Organizing Team

On May 26 2024, the 4 Seasons Mountain Trails Association (a community sports club) organized the Spring Lebanon Mountain Trail Race (SLMT). The race which was held in the breathtaking Shouf Biosphere Reserve along the Lebanon Mountain Trail attracted both local and international trail running enthusiasts and marked a significant milestone in the country's growing trail running community.

For the second year in a row, The Spring Lebanon Mountain Trail Race was recognized by International Trail Running groups:

- The UTMB Group (Ultra Trail Du Mont-Blanc) which provides a UTMB index to all runners who were able to finish the race within the official cutoff times
- The ITRA association (International Trail Running Association) which provides ITRA points. With UTMB index and ITRA points, runners were able to compare their performance with international trail runners and participate in UTMB race series around the world.

A Race for All

Our 2024 edition of the race was an inclusive event, offering a diverse range of courses and challenges, and catering to runners of all levels, all ages and those with visual impairment.

- The 8km fun run provided a gentle introduction to trail running for younger age groups from 12 years and above,
- While the 25km and 50km races tested the endurance and technical abilities of seasoned athletes.

The participation of over 250 runners, who came from different countries including Brazil, Ireland, Spain, France, the USA, Switzerland, Germany, the Netherlands, Egypt, Sweden & the UAE, emphasized the growing international appeal of our event.

A unique highlight of this year's race was the inclusion of visually impaired runners, a first in Lebanon, participating in the 8km racecourse. This initiative was possible due to collaboration between the Lebanon Mountain Trail Association (LMTA) who offered the directional bar system, Blind with Vision association led by Ms. Mary Kleainy, and our club.

The directional bar system was first introduced by the Lebanon Mountain Trail Association as part of their initiative Nature for All. This innovative technology enabled visually impaired and ambitious athletes to navigate the challenging 8km terrain, fostering inclusivity and inspiring others.

A Great Benefit for Ecotourism

The Spring Lebanon Mountain Trail Race has emerged as a powerful catalyst for ecotourism in Lebanon. By showcasing the country's stunning natural beauty and diverse landscapes, the event attracts international visitors who are eager to experience the thrill of trail running in a pristine environment. The Shouf Biosphere Reserve, with its green forests, flora, rugged mountains, and picturesque villages, provides the perfect backdrop for this exhilarating sport.

The race undoubtedly has a significant economic impact on the region. Local businesses, including guesthouses, restaurants, and shops, benefit from the influx of visitors. The full booking of accommodation in the Shouf region during the race weekend was a testament to the event's success, and its ability to generate revenue stimulating the local economy.

A Growing Trail Running Community

The success of the Spring Lebanon Mountain Trail Race reflects the growing popularity of trail running in Lebanon. The country's diverse terrain, ranging from coastal paths to high-altitude peaks, offers endless opportunities for runners to explore and challenge themselves.

The 4 Seasons Mountain Trails, events' organizers, have played a pivotal role in nurturing this burgeoning community by providing well-organized and varied races since 2016 promoting the sport's values of environmental conservation, sustainability and social responsibility.



"Becoming an ultra-runner was one of the most transformative journeys of my life. At first, it seemed impossible—running distances I couldn't even imagine, pushing my body and mind to limits I didn't know existed. The training was grueling, often lonely, and required sacrifices, but every step taught me resilience and discipline. Crossing the finish line of my first ultra wasn't just about completing the race, it was about proving to myself that I was capable of so much more than I believed. Ultra running taught me to embrace discomfort, find joy in the struggle, and appreciate the small victories along the way. Beyond the physical challenge, the community I found was unexpected and priceless. Fellow runners and organizers, with their unbreakable spirit and shared grit, became my biggest supporters. Each race became an adventure, every trail run is a lesson in perseverance and gratitude. Looking back, I realized ultra running wasn't just about running farther—it was about discovering who I am when I step beyond my comfort zone. It's enriched my life in ways I never imagined, and the lessons I've learned extend far beyond the trails. It was absolutely worth it."

- Mrs. Assil Ayyash; winner 3rd age category in 50km race



As the Spring Lebanon Mountain Trail Race continues to grow in popularity, it has the potential to position Lebanon as a premier destination for trail running in the Middle East. By promoting sustainable tourism, empowering local communities, and inspiring individuals to connect with nature and discover their physical and mental strength, this event is making a significant contribution to the country's social, economic, and environmental well-being.

Finally, the Spring Lebanon Mountain Trail would not have been possible without the continuous support of our partners, main sponsors, sponsors, and all the volunteers.

Partners: Destination Shouf, Lebanese Federation of Athletics, Lebanese Federation of Sports Climbing and Mountaineering, Lebanon Mountain Trail Association, Blind with Vision.

Main Sponsors: Coral Oil, Mikesport, Steep Production, Let's Run Beirut

Sponsors: Taqa Snacks, Aquafina, Gatorade, Gnuts, Gspread, Al Fundok hotel, Alma Libre Adventures.

Ecotourism Diplomacy

Fadi Ziade
Lebanon's Ambassador to Canada



The Lebanon Mountain Trail serves as a powerful instrument of “ecotourism diplomacy”: a dynamic intersection of environmental sustainability, tourism, and international relations.

As the Ambassador of Lebanon to Canada, my participation with the Lebanon Mountain Trail delegation in The World Trails Conference in Ottawa 2024 was a meaningful exercise in this form of diplomacy. By showcasing Lebanon's natural beauty and sustainable tourism potential, we contributed to strengthening international partnerships and attracting eco-conscious travelers.

Diplomatic support for initiatives like the Lebanon Mountain Trail not only enhances Lebanon's global image but also fosters collaboration with environmental organizations and creates opportunities for cross-border trail networks and sustainable tourism policies.



At The World Trails Conference, I had the privilege of joining the Lebanese delegation, led by the LMTA.

This prestigious global forum brought together trail experts, enthusiasts, and organizations to exchange knowledge, forge connections, and shape the future of trail experiences.

The LMTA delegates stood out as key representatives, highlighting Lebanon's breathtaking landscapes & its emergence as a leading ecotourism destination.

It was an honor for our embassy to support the LMTA's mission in Canada, reaffirming Lebanon's commitment to sustainable tourism and international cooperation within the global trail community.

ICRC & LMTA

Promoting Inclusion Through Access to Nature Activities for Children with Disabilities

ICRC PRP TEAM

The inclusion of people with disabilities in all aspects of society remains a critical global challenge. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has committed to addressing these disparities through its 2030 Vision on Disability, which advocates for full inclusion, community empowerment, and rights-based approaches to rehabilitation and social integration.

One of the key pillars of this vision is ensuring that people with disabilities—especially those from vulnerable backgrounds—have access to activities that enhance their well-being and social participation. In Lebanon, the ICRC has partnered with the Lebanon Mountain Trail Association (LMTA) to create opportunities that provide better access to nature for children with disabilities, including Lebanese from underserved communities and Syrian refugees.

Children with disabilities often face limited opportunities for recreation and social engagement, as their lives are frequently centered around medical appointments, physiotherapy sessions, and assistive devices.

Moreover, the lack of infrastructure, support services and systems for the disabled in Lebanon impacts their quality of life and further limits such opportunities.

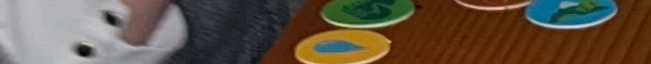
This project offers a rare and valuable opportunity for children with disabilities to step beyond their routine, explore nature, and experience the joy of adventure in an inclusive and supportive environment.



Beyond benefiting children, this initiative also fosters greater engagement between ICRC staff and the communities they serve. Employees who typically work in administrative or technical roles have the opportunity to connect with children in the field, witnessing firsthand the impact of their work. This type of hands-on experience strengthens organizational commitment to disability inclusion and enhances staff awareness of the real-world challenges faced by people with disabilities.

The ICRC's 2030 Vision on Disability is a call to action for more inclusive, community-driven approaches to disability support.

While clinical rehabilitation remains essential, integrating outdoor and social experiences can significantly enhance the overall quality of life for people with disabilities. We extend our sincere appreciation to LMTA for their dedication and partnership in making these experiences possible, helping to create a more inclusive and accessible world for all.



EDUCATION

LUCKY BREAK

SECTION#3 STRAWBERRY TREES
On this spectacular LMT hike, you'll come across two species of the Strawberry Tree (Qualea.)

SECTION#4 TANNOUR BREAD
Ready for a massive straight out of a Tannour?

LUCKY BREAK

SECTION#12 ARQA CAVE & TEMPLE
This is where you will pay a visit to the large Intestine Cave of Arqa and its impressive waterfall which is the source of the Adonis River, or "Nahr Ibrahim".

SECTION#12 WESTERN WHITE STORK
Twice a year, millions of birds embark on an impressive migration between Africa & Europe, in search for food & areas to raise their young. That's quite incredible!

SECTION#13 LILIES OF THE VALLEY
When hiking this section in the spring, you will find Lilies of the Valley, beautiful white flowers growing in clusters along the banks of the rivers & streams!

SECTION#13 FAORA - KPARDEBIAN
Take your lunch break at the well-known Faora ruins. And wander through the Roman temples with their columns & altars.

SECTION#4 JUPITER TREES
All along your hike in Akkar & Dimanayeh, you will encounter our magical Jupiter trees, enjoy it!

MISSIONS

LUCKY BREAK

MISSIONS



Game on! If You Can't Hike It, Play It

Ranwa Imad
LMTA Communication Coordinator



Board games are about more than just strategy and a bit of luck, they're a doorway to adventure. But what if one could also open your eyes to a greater cause? That's exactly what we've achieved with The Ultimate Hike, a board game that's not just about winning but about learning, too.

Here's the scoop: this isn't your average family-night pastime. It's a bold, fun, and educational journey through Lebanon's first national trail: Lebanon Mountain Trail (LMT). Let's take you behind the scenes of how The Ultimate Hike came to life, what makes it special, and why you'll want to play it.

The Trail to Creation

Spoiler alert: making a board game is harder than hiking 450 kilometers of the LMT. (Okay, maybe not that hard, but close.)

Our mission wasn't just to create a game—it was to design an edutainment experience that highlights climate change and environmental conservation while celebrating the natural beauty of the trail. And let's be honest, we rewrote the rules (literally) three or four times before we got it just right.

This game came to life through the combined efforts of environmental experts, game developers, and our dedicated LMTA team.

From concept brainstorming to intense focus group sessions and endless tweaks to the rules, every card, token, and trail section was thoughtfully crafted.



What's the Game About?

Imagine this: you're virtually hiking the Lebanon Mountain Trail, but it's not just about hiking every section. Along the way, you'll tackle missions, collect resources, and understand environmental threats.

Here's what you can expect:

- **Age Range:** For players aged 14 and above.
- **Objective:** Complete three missions before anyone else while keeping your essential gear intact.
- **Gameplay:** Strategic, fast-paced, and full of surprises (Lucky Break cards, we're looking at you).

This game doesn't just entertain—it teaches. Each mission you complete raises awareness about conservation and sustainability. You're not just playing; you're making a difference.

What Makes It Special?

Think of it as more than a game. It's a journey into the heart of Lebanon's natural heritage. As you navigate the board, you'll learn about the environmental challenges facing the LMT—and how small actions (like recharging gear or trading resources) mirror real-world solutions.

It's perfect for families, friends, and anyone who loves a challenge with purpose. In the back of every card of the sections you'll get to know more

The Road Ahead

Now that the game is complete, we're gearing up to make it available where it matters most—strategic locations along the LMT, from guesthouses to cozy coffee shops. And we're planning awareness sessions in schools and universities to bring the game's mission full circle.

Whether you're a seasoned gamer or a trail enthusiast looking for your next adventure, The Ultimate Hike is calling your name. Gather your crew, roll the dice, and get ready to hike (virtually) for a cause that matters.

LMT Sections

*ST: Side Trail
 **LT: Literary Trail
 p1 = Part 1

● Moderate ● Challenging ● Difficult ● Very Difficult

Section #	From	To	Distance in km	North to South			South to North		
				Elevation	Difficulty Level	Difficulty Level	Elevation	Difficulty Level	Difficulty Level
1A	Andqet	El Qoubaiyat	17	+663	-720	●	-663	+720	●
1	El Qoubaiyat	Tashea	18.5	+1216	-642	●	-1216	+642	●
2	Tashea	el Qemmamine	23	+1022	-1511	●	-1022	+1511	●
3	el Qemmamine	Kfar Brine	9.3	+922	-587	●	-922	+587	●
4	Kfar Brine	Bqaa Safrine	14.7	+1060	-1027	●	-1060	+1027	●
5	Bqaa Safrine	Ehden	18	+1143	-897	●	-1143	+897	●
6	Ehden	Qozhaya/Qadisha valley	10.4	+484	-959	●	-484	+959	●
7	Qozhaya/Qadisha valley	Bcharre	13.7	+1277	-797	●	-1277	+797	●
8	Bcharre	Bazaoun	19.3	+897	-912	●	-897	+912	●
9	Bazaoun	Tannourine el-Fauouqa	19.7	+1210	-1109	●	-1210	+1109	●
Douma ST-p1	Baatara (via Sikket el Sham)	Douma	6.3	+213	-691	●	-213	+691	●
Douma ST-p2	Baatara (via Jabal Foghri)	Douma	7.5	+704	-216	●	-704	+216	●
10	Tannourine el-Fauouqa	El Aaqoura	17.2	+980	-1068	●	-980	+1068	●
Ehmej ST - p1	Ehmej	Baatara Sinkhole	8.7	+508	-667	●	-508	+667	●
Ehmej ST - p2	Ehmej	El Aaqoura	15.8	+1057	-777	●	-1057	+777	●
11	El Aaqoura	Afqa	20	+932	-958	●	-932	+958	●
12	Afqa	Faraya	18.2	+946	-803	●	-946	+803	●
13	Faraya	Kfardebiane	12.5	+357	-753	●	-357	+753	●
14	Kfardebiane	Baskinta	21.3	+947	-1004	●	-947	+1004	●
Baskinta Literary Trail	Saydet Nih Convent	Mikhael Naime Mausoleum	24	+1200	-850	●	-1200	+850	●
15	Baskinta	El Mtain	17.5	+1004	-1099	●	-1004	+1099	●
16	El Mtain	Falougha	14.7	+1072	-607	●	-1072	+607	●
17	Falougha	Ain Zhalta	18	+560	-936	●	-560	+936	●
18	Ain Zhalta	El Barouk	22	+1093	-1221	●	-1093	+1221	●
19	El Barouk	Maaser ech-Chouf	14	+1067	-668	●	-1067	+668	●
20	Maaser ech-Chouf	Niha	14	+518	-629	●	-518	+629	●
21	Niha	Jezzine	16	+852	-918	●	-852	+918	●
Bkassine ST-p1	Niha Fort	Bkassine	7.5	+298	-678	●	-298	+678	●
Bkassine ST-p2	Bkassine	Jezzine	15	+615	-433	●	-615	+433	●
22	Jezzine	Aaitanit	15	+951	-881	●	-951	+881	●
23	Aaitanit	Kaoukaba Bou Arab	15.3	+716	-624	●	-716	+624	●
24	Kaoukaba Bou Arab	Rachaiya	8.7	+458	-246	●	-458	+246	●
25	Rachaiya	Hasbaiya	24.5	+829	-1311	●	-829	+1311	●
26	Hasbaiya	Marjaayoun	16	+626	-601	●	-626	+601	●



Know Your Waymarks

	LMT الدرب الأساسي	SIDE TRAIL درب جانبي	CONNECTING TRAIL درب رابط	NETWORK TRAILS شبكة الدروب
GO STRAIGHT إلى الأمام				
TURN LEFT إنعطف يساراً				
TURN RIGHT إنعطف يمينا				
WRONG DIRECTION إتجاه خطأ				
END/BEGINNING OF TRAIL نهاية/بداية الدرب				





CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE

A Socioeconomic Environmental and Economic Study on the LMT: an AFD Funded Study

Jad Abou Arrage, PhD – Tourism Expert, **Jean Stephan**, PhD – Environment and Climate Change Expert, **Maroun Khreich**, PhD – Cultural Heritage Expert, **Salim Roukoz**, GIS and Mapping Expert

In July 2024, a team of national experts embarked on a comprehensive sectoral study along the Lebanon Mountain Trail (LMT). Conducted as part of the Agence Française de Développement-funded project: Emergence of the First Trail Network from the Mediterranean, the study delved into key themes including rural tourism, cultural heritage preservation, environmental conservation, and climate change. Its goal was to equip the Lebanon Mountain Trail Association (LMTA) with the insights needed for informed decision-making and strategic planning to position the LMT as a leading nature-based and rural tourism destination in Lebanon and the broader region. Below is a summary of the findings and strategic recommendations developed by the experts and endorsed by the LMTA.

1. Rural Tourism Development

The LMT serves as a critical backbone for rural tourism in Lebanon, weaving through the country's stunning mountain landscapes, traditional villages, and areas rich in cultural heritage. Over the years, rural tourism initiatives along the LMT have sought to create unique and immersive experiences. Visitors can embark on hiking adventures through breathtaking terrain, enjoy stays in quaint rural accommodations that reflect the charm of local architecture, and engage in agritourism activities that bring them closer to Lebanon's agricultural traditions. Culinary tourism, with its focus on showcasing Lebanon's diverse and flavorful gastronomy, has also become a highlight, offering everything from home-cooked village meals to farm-to-table dining experiences.

Despite these rich offerings, the sector faces substantial challenges. The infrastructure supporting rural tourism remains underdeveloped, with inconsistent standards in trail development both generally and along the LMT itself. These gaps hinder the trail's potential to fully integrate into a broader, well-maintained rural tourism network. Additionally, the absence of a cohesive legal framework for rural tourism has left the sector fragmented, with unregulated operations and missed opportunities for structured growth. Service quality varies significantly across the trail, further complicating efforts to provide a consistent and reliable visitor experience. Moreover, professional marketing strategies are lacking, both locally and internationally.

The study emphasizes the need for targeted interventions to overcome these challenges and unlock the LMT's full potential as a driver of sustainable rural tourism and local economic development. Standardizing trail management practices is a critical first step, ensuring that the LMT is maintained to high and

consistent standards that enhance visitor safety and satisfaction.

Introducing governance mechanisms can further support the alignment of efforts across the trail and other similar initiatives in Lebanon, fostering a more unified and collaborative approach to rural tourism development. Effective marketing is another cornerstone of the proposed recommendations. Leveraging digital platforms and social media, alongside tailored campaigns that highlight the LMT's unique experiences, can significantly expand its reach and attract a broader domestic and international audience. Addressing seasonal tourism dependency is equally important. By diversifying the range of activities available along the trail, such as introducing winter trekking or cultural festivals, the LMT can appeal to visitors year-round. Service quality can be enhanced through capacity-building programs for local operators, empowering them with the skills and knowledge needed to deliver exceptional and authentic experiences.

2. Cultural Heritage Preservation

The LMT weaves through regions teeming with cultural heritage, offering a window into Lebanon's rich tapestry of history, traditions, and artistry. Stretching across millennia, Lebanon's legacy encompasses archaeological treasures, architectural marvels, traditional crafts, and vibrant local traditions. Each village along the LMT tells its own story, shaped by layers of demographic shifts and cultural exchanges over time. Tangible heritage, including archaeological sites, spans across all regions of the LMT and covers eras from prehistory to the Ottoman period. The intangible cultural heritage (ICH) along the LMT villages is equally compelling, featuring shared traditions such as the Dabke dance, agricultural practices, religious festivities, and culinary arts. Despite this wealth of heritage, Lebanon

faces pressing challenges in preserving these assets, including limited resources, inadequate documentation, and the impacts of urbanization and modernization.

The study highlighted the urgent need to assess and safeguard both tangible and intangible cultural heritage. A thorough inventory of cultural assets is essential to understanding their scope and significance, with the creation of a centralized database serving as a cornerstone for effective conservation. By documenting and mapping heritage elements across the LMT, stakeholders can prioritize preservation efforts and integrate cultural experiences into the broader tourism offering. Moreover, to capitalize on this cultural wealth, the study recommends developing thematic trails that connect visitors to key heritage sites, offering immersive experiences such as craft workshops, culinary tours, and storytelling events. Supporting local artisans and showcasing their work through curated exhibitions and retail outlets along the trail can bridge the gap between cultural preservation and tourism. For instance, promoting traditional crafts and performances can enrich the visitor experience while fostering economic opportunities for local communities. Additionally, institutional and regulatory support is crucial to these efforts, including the implementation of policies that protect and promote cultural heritage. Conservation and management strategies must address the immediate & long-term needs of both tangible and intangible assets. This includes training and empowering local communities to serve as stewards of their heritage. Educational initiatives can further enhance awareness of cultural values, inspiring a collective commitment to preservation.

By integrating heritage development and promotion into the LMT's broader framework, the trail can serve as a living museum of Lebanon's history and traditions. This holistic approach not only enriches the visitor experience but also strengthens local economies and reinforces the cultural identity of the communities along the trail. Through concerted efforts in preservation, promotion, and capacity building, the LMT can become a model for sustainable cultural tourism that celebrates Lebanon's unparalleled heritage.

3. Environmental Conservation and Climate Change Mitigation

The LMT is not only a recreational and cultural resource but also a critical ecological corridor that supports Lebanon's mountain ecosystems and rich biodiversity. It traverses sensitive habitats and protected areas, encompassing exceptional landscapes, nature reserves, biosphere reserves, and zones with potential for natural park development recognized at the national level. However, this invaluable resource faces significant environmental challenges, including habitat degradation driven by human activity, shifts in land use, and the mounting effects of climate change, such as rising temperatures and altered precipitation patterns. These factors present a pressing need for comprehensive conservation and sustainable management

strategies.

The study revealed notable changes in land cover and land use, with increases in forested areas, agricultural lands, sand pits, and quarries often coming at the expense of grasslands and shrublands. Most of the trail crosses private lands used for production or resource exploitation, yet it also passes through protected areas such as nature reserves and protected forests. Along the trail and its side routes, several key biodiversity hotspots were identified, and preliminary assessments were conducted to establish a foundation for further research and conservation planning. Water resources along the trail were also evaluated, as they play a crucial role in sustaining ecosystems and supporting communities. Additionally, risks associated with climate change—such as landslides, floods, erosion, and forest fires—were mapped using GIS, providing valuable baseline data to guide future monitoring and prioritize action.

To address environmental challenges along the LMT, the study emphasized the need to modernize Lebanon's environmental laws and adopt adaptive management plans that focus on ecological restoration, improved land management, and the protection of sensitive areas. A key priority is the identification and conservation of biodiversity hotspots while promoting sustainable resource management practices and responsible tourism. Climate change strategies must also be integrated into these efforts to mitigate its impacts on the trail's ecosystems. Achieving these goals requires strong collaboration among various stakeholders, including local communities, national authorities, and conservation organizations. Raising awareness among visitors about the natural resources and challenges faced by the LMT is equally important. Engaging them in activities such as habitat restoration can foster a sense of shared responsibility for preserving this natural treasure.

A Holistic Vision for the LMT

Ultimately, the LMTA must navigate the delicate interplay between economic growth, environmental stewardship, and cultural heritage preservation. By weaving together rural tourism development, cultural heritage preservation, and environmental conservation, the LMT can serve as a beacon for sustainable tourism.

Collaborative stakeholder engagement, innovative technologies, and capacity-building programs will be key to realizing this vision. These strategies not only enhance the trail's value but also contribute to Lebanon's broader sustainable development goals, ensuring long-term benefits for local communities and the environment alike.

The Sectorial Diagnosis on the LMT at Beit Toureef

Julie Lebanan
LMTA Program Administrator



Beit Toureef's historic charm set the stage for a special event on July 2nd: a panel of experts, including Dr. Jad Abou Arrage, Dr. Jean Stephan, and Dr. Maroun Khreich, unveiled the key findings of their study, "Sectorial Diagnosis on the Lebanon Mountain." The event, hosted by the Lebanon Mountain Trail Association (LMTA), drew a large audience of active members and board members.

This study was conducted within the framework of the AFD-funded project, "Emergence of the first trail network from the Mediterranean" and analyzes rural tourism, cultural heritage, environmental conservation, and climate change impacts along the Lebanon Mountain Trail.

Dr. Jad Abou Arrage highlighted Lebanon's immense potential for rural tourism, emphasizing the economic significance of the sector. He discussed the challenges hindering its full realization, such as infrastructure, regulations, and data availability.

Dr. Maroun Khreich focused on the often-neglected mountain heritage and advocated for its preservation. A framework for its assessment, documentation, and promotion was presented.

Dr. Jean Stephan presented the findings on environmental conservation and climate change, including land use patterns, climate change impacts, and water resource issues. The study also explored the link between snow cover changes and climate change, identifying interconnected environmental risks.

The study also included the contribution of GIS expert, Mr. Salim Roukoz.

The study's overarching recommendation is to balance economic growth with environmental protection and cultural preservation; this can be achieved through effective policies, sustainable practices, community engagement, and diversified tourism products. By adopting a comprehensive and long-term perspective, the LMTA can ensure the LMT's sustainability as a leading nature-based and rural tourism destination.

A Path to Nature and Prosperity The Economic Impact of the Lebanon Mountain Trail

Jad Abou Arrage
PhD – Tourism Expert



Trails are more than scenic routes; they are lifelines for tourism, connecting us to natural and cultural treasures while promoting sustainability, recreation, and health. They also invigorate local economies by creating jobs, driving rural tourism, and increasing spending on accommodations, guiding services, and local goods. Recognizing this, a study conducted in August 2024 set out to measure the economic impact of the Lebanon Mountain Trail.

The study aimed to explore three key areas: who uses the trail and how, the trail's direct and indirect economic benefits, and its overall economic value.

Researchers employed a four-phase method: first, reviewing global studies on trail economics; second, selecting tailored assessment tools; third, gathering data from trail visitors and local businesses; and finally, analyzing the findings.

Among the tools used, the Ad hoc model estimated direct and indirect impacts by analyzing spending patterns along the LMT. **Travel Cost Valuation** measured visitor expenses such as transportation and lodging, while **Contingent Valuation** explored willingness to pay for trail upkeep through donations or access fees. **The Benefit-Cost Analysis (BCA)** compared the trail's economic, social, and environmental benefits against its management and maintenance costs.

The results were remarkable.

The LMT generates an estimated **\$17 million to \$34 million** annually, with every dollar invested delivering **\$42 to \$85** in social benefits. For every dollar spent directly by visitors, an additional **\$0.50** circulates back into the local economy—a multiplier effect highlighting the trail's robust economic contributions.

These findings underscore the LMT's value as a sustainable investment, enhancing tourism and supporting local livelihoods.

While there is room to expand research, especially on broader economic effects, the study reaffirms the importance of preserving and promoting trails like the LMT. With the right policies and sustainable management, the LMT can continue to enrich both communities and visitors, solidifying its role as a vital pillar of Lebanon's rural heritage and community development.



**LMT
BEYOND BORDERS**

LMTA at ITB Berlin

Alia Fares

Archaeologist - Cultural Heritage Consultant - LMTA ambassador Germany



Every year and during the 1st week of March, the biggest tourism fair and exhibition event in the world, known as the ITB (International Tourism Börse), takes place in Berlin. Tourism ministries from around the globe, thousands of travel companies, tour operators and tourism managers gather to promote their destinations and packages during this intensely packed 4-day event which attracts thousands of tourism practitioners and enthusiasts, and allows them to network with one another to launch new tourism destinations around the world.



And for the first time ever, the LMTA was at the fair to promote the trail and Lebanon's outstanding cultural and natural heritage. A team of four LMTA volunteers and staff joined hands three months in advance to prepare the stand's design as well as the LMTA's visibility, communication and action plan on-site.

The LMTA stand was assigned to the adventure hall, surrounded by like-minded trail promoters as well as ecotourism tour operators. For four days, we promoted the trail and its 27 sections, its natural and cultural heritage, and encouraged visitors to discover Lebanon's villages and admire its mountains. The team networked with a diversity of adventure and ecotourism businesses, professionals and experts from around the globe.

In spite of the raging conflicts in the Middle East at the time and the ongoing tension and challenges still affecting Lebanon, we remain committed to our mission of elevating the LMTA's awareness and notoriety around the world, paving the way for a swift recovery upon a return of better and shinier days. We remain hopeful that all of our hard work will one day pay off and help Lebanon regain its well-deserved reputation and leading spot as a cultural destination and a hiking paradise.



Séminaire Annuel du Med Trails Network (MTN) en France

Rachad Sakr
LMTA Projects & Operations Manager



Après le lancement officiel du Réseau des Sentiers Méditerranéens (Med Trails Network - MTN) et un premier séminaire au Liban en septembre 2023, le second rendez-vous annuel du réseau s'est tenu dans la région des Alpes du Sud, en France, du 10 au 14 juin 2024. Cet événement a rassemblé les membres du réseau à Thoard, puis à Marseille, pour une série d'ateliers et de visites de terrain dédiés au tourisme de randonnée en Méditerranée.



Un réseau méditerranéen unique en son genre

Le MTN, premier réseau de sentiers de grande randonnée en Méditerranée, a pour vocation de promouvoir le développement économique des zones rurales à travers le tourisme de randonnée. Il valorise les spécificités géographiques et culturelles de la région euro-méditerranéenne. Ce réseau regroupe actuellement des itinéraires en France, au Liban, en Jordanie et en Palestine, et ambitionne d'intégrer d'autres pays méditerranéens à l'avenir.

Des échanges sur les enjeux économiques et environnementaux

Les discussions ont mis en lumière les défis communs des territoires méditerranéens en matière de tourisme de randonnée. Parmi les thèmes abordés figuraient les impacts du changement climatique, les opportunités économiques liées à ce secteur, et la promotion du tourisme communautaire. Ces échanges ont permis de partager des expériences entre les Alpes et le Proche-Orient, renforçant une vision commune pour un développement durable du tourisme de randonnée.

Une collaboration euro-méditerranéenne

Organisé par deux associations françaises, AFRAT et Tétraktys, cet événement a réuni des professionnels de la randonnée issus de plusieurs pays : la Lebanon Mountain Trail Association (LMTA), la Jordan Trail Association (JTA) et la Palestinian Heritage Trail Union (PHT). Deux itinéraires français emblématiques étaient également représentés : La Roulo, valorisant le patrimoine pastoral, et le sentier Sur les Pas de Marie-Madeleine, retraçant le parcours de la sainte dans le sud de la France.



Un avenir prometteur pour le réseau

Ce séminaire a marqué une étape clé dans la collaboration entre les membres du réseau. Ensemble, ils ont jeté les bases d'initiatives visant à sensibiliser aux enjeux climatiques, à développer des activités économiques locales et à renforcer la visibilité internationale des sentiers. Ce projet prévoit également d'élargir le réseau à de nouveaux membres pour enrichir davantage le tourisme de randonnée en Méditerranée.



Fundraising Event in Australia for LMTA

Sari Haddad

LMTA Ambassador to Sydney, Australia



In 2023, I organized Trail Blazing the Future, a fundraiser in Sydney that raised AUD 52,000 for the Lebanon Mountain Trail Association (LMTA) to train and certify 30 new local guides. This initiative was inspired by my friendship with Nancy Youssef, an Australian-Lebanese entrepreneur, author, and philanthropist. Nancy, who specializes in finance and business mentoring, had successfully raised \$250,000 for sustainable projects in Malawi. Her passion for community-building inspired me to channel a similar amount of energy towards Lebanon.



During a trip to Lebanon in August 2023, I introduced Nancy to Omar Sark, the LMTA's Executive Director and other members of the organization. Our meeting in Sahel Alma, overlooking Jounieh Bay, was serendipitous. As paragliders soared above us, I convinced Nancy—who has a fear of heights—to take a leap of faith and paraglide. That exhilarating experience symbolized courage and trust, and it solidified our commitment to supporting the LMTA. Then and there, we decided to host a fundraiser in Sydney, with the goal of showcasing the LMTA's mission to the Lebanese-Australian community.

Planning the event was fraught with challenges. Scheduled for November 2023, we faced immense pressure to sell 80 tickets at AUD500 each, with VIP tables priced AUD10,000. The outbreak of the Gaza war in October added emotional complexity, making us question the timing.

However, we realized that investing in Lebanon's future through the LMTA was a form of resistance and hope. With the support of 6HEAD, the restaurant I managed, we transformed the venue into a black-and-gold gala, featuring a Lebanese-inspired menu, live oud music, and stunning views of the Sydney Opera House.

52,000 AUD raised for the LMTA

The event was a resounding success. Key figures from the Lebanese-Australian community, including Consul General Charbel Maakaroun, attended. Guest speakers shared their experiences with the LMTA, and other participants who connected to the event from Beirut shared their views about the trail's socioeconomic impact and its significance to local communities. The night was a perfect blend of storytelling, entertainment and celebration, culminating in \$52,000 raised for the LMTA.

This journey taught me the power of community, resilience, and unity. Despite doubts and anxiety, the support of partners like Nancy, the LMTA, and the Lebanese-Australian community made this dream a reality. This event was just the beginning—a testament to the potential of diaspora communities to uplift Lebanon and preserve its natural and cultural heritage. **Hike it, Protect it.**

LMTA Beyond Borders This Time in Switzerland

Maria Boulos

Member of LMTA Team in Switzerland



So, what connects the pretty little town of Morges in Switzerland on the shores of Lac Lemman with the LMT? For one, its magnificent cedar trees in the forested park that borders its lakefront. For another, its enthusiasm for the mountain trails of Lebanon, born of an event hosted there on 25 May 2024 by the LMTA- Switzerland committee.

The very first event organized in Switzerland in 2023 by the LMT Ambassador in Switzerland, Olivier Zuber, focused on communicating the objectives of the LMTA to an audience of dedicated Swiss hikers and those member organisations of the Swiss hiking trail federation that oversee the development and standards of trails, maintaining their signage, security and accessibility. This second event on 25 May sponsored in part by Banque Audi aimed at introducing the Lebanon Mountain Trail to the Lebanese community and their friends in the French speaking area of Switzerland, and raising awareness of the ecological, cultural and community impacts that the LMT generates along its path.

The event was timed to coincide with the Fete de la Nature, an annual citizen-led campaign in Switzerland that celebrates nature and biodiversity. In the presence of the Lebanese Ambassador to Switzerland, Ms Rola Nouredine, more than 60 participants shared in the enthusiastic passion of the LMTA organization committee. They left the event eager to hike the trails and in doing so, to contribute to the economic growth and ecological protection of Lebanon.



This was a first introduction – but it generated both curiosity to discover more, and interest in spreading the message to other parts of the country. To build on its success, the LMT leadership connected with Swiss trail groups, and a follow-up event is tentatively scheduled for May 2025 to encourage boots on the ground, and to identify opportunities for financial and technical support for the LMTA.

Switzerland deeply values its hiking trails, recognizing them for the precious natural, ecological and social asset that they are, to the point of embedding the protection of its trails in its federal constitution. Nearly half of the 15-74 year olds living in Switzerland are avid hikers. Even if you start your hike alone, you are likely to end your trail with a new acquaintance you made along the way. Those who walk the trails find inspiration and balm for the soul along the way – in that, the LMT and the Swiss trails have so much in common.

Stay tuned!

LMTA & Fédération Française de la Randonnée Pédestre

Vers une Nouvelle Coopération

Séverine IKKAWI

Directrice des Relations Extérieures et Affaires Internationales



Le 3 septembre 2024, dans la montagne libanaise, la Lebanon Mountain Trail Association, représentée par son président Alfred Farwagi, et la Fédération Française de la Randonnée Pédestre, représentée par sa Directrice des Relations extérieures, Séverine Ikkawi, ont signé un important protocole d'accord, entre leur 2 organisations, entre leur 2 pays.

Au cœur de cet accord, les itinéraires de randonnée au Liban aujourd'hui symbolisé par le LMTA.

Depuis bientôt 80 ans (le premier GR®, sentier de Grande Randonnée, a été balisé en blanc et rouge sur les bords de la Loire en août 1947), la FFRandonnée a développé une expérience reconnue sur la création, l'entretien et la promotion des itinéraires de randonnée, à la fois facteurs de développement touristique local, de connaissance et de préservation des milieux naturels et culturels traversés. La fédération mettra donc à la disposition de LMTA sa documentation technique, Charte du balisage et de la signalisation ou encore procédure d'homologation en GR®, afin de l'adapter à la réalité libanaise et créer ainsi des documents de référence, peut-être, demain, officialisés par Libnor.

Un programme de formation accompagnera ce volet technique. Il s'agira pour des formateurs fédéraux de proposer des sessions de formation de baliseurs-animateurs aux bénévoles de LMTA mais aussi aux agents des collectivités territoriales traversés par les itinéraires.



Un objectif guide les équipes de LMTA et de la fédération: Offrir aux libanais et à tous ceux qui visiteront le pays du Cèdre à l'avenir un réseau d'itinéraires balisés de façon cohérente, en phase avec les critères de qualité internationaux, qui permette de découvrir les trésors que recèlent la montagne, le littoral ou les plaines.

De son côté, la fédération française souhaite s'inspirer de la stratégie de LMTA vers les publics jeunes. L'éducation à l'environnement est un enjeu majeur. Comprendre la nature pour mieux la protéger doit être au cœur de nos sociétés. LMTA a développé un véritable savoir-faire et accumulé des expériences auprès des écoles, des associations et groupes de jeunesse, en publiant des guides et programmes pédagogiques qui intéressent fortement la fédération qui rêvent de voir un dispositif « Savoir marcher » adopté par le ministère de l'Education nationale.



De belles ambitions, de beaux projets sont dorénavant partagés par des acteurs français et libanais particulièrement motivés!

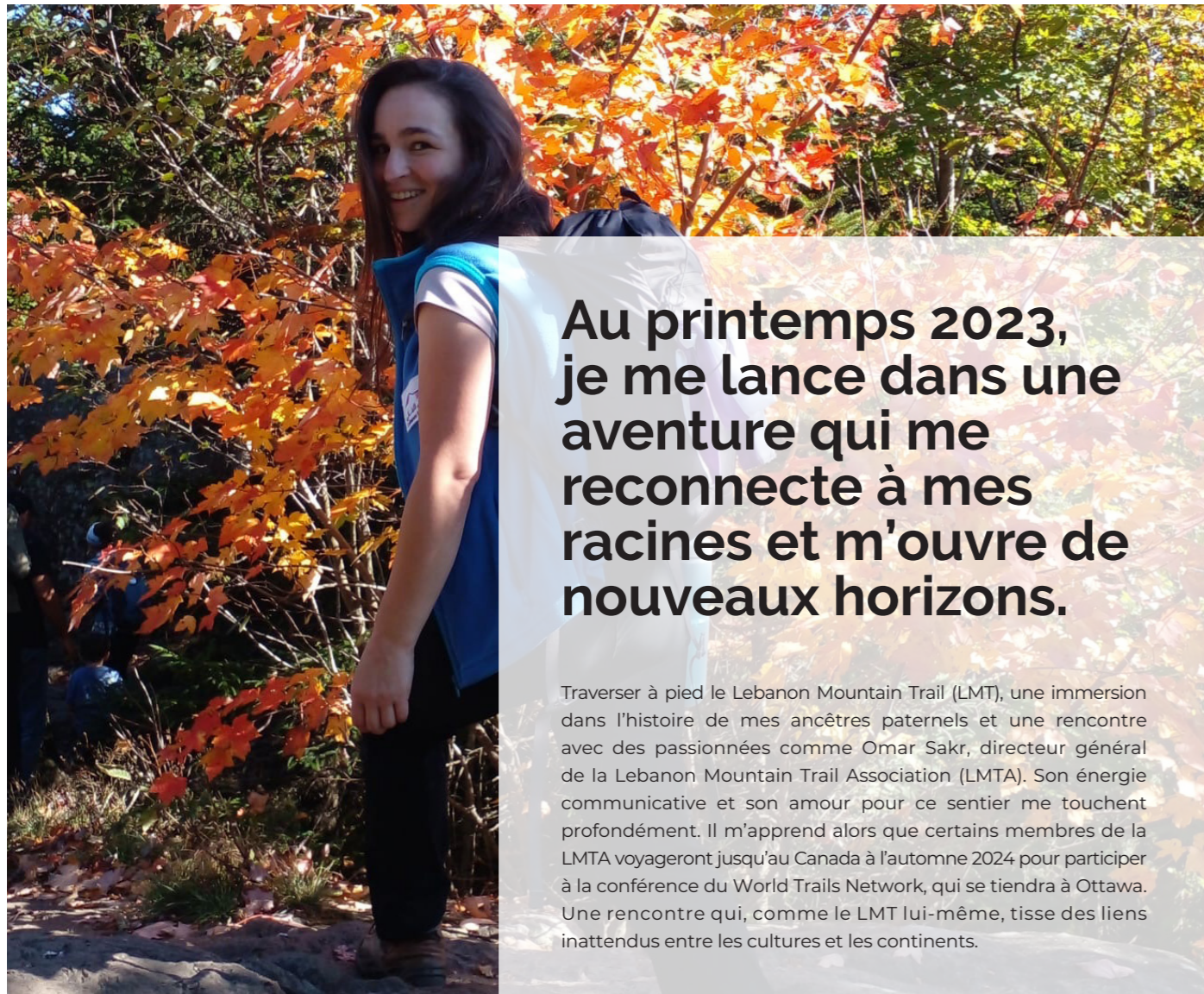
Une Randonnée Avec la LMTA du Liban au Canada

Mireille Malaket

Board Member, Canadian Friends of the LMT



Trente ans, trente jours de marche, et un rêve devenu réalité



**Au printemps 2023,
je me lance dans une
aventure qui me
reconnecte à mes
racines et m'ouvre de
nouveaux horizons.**

Traverser à pied le Lebanon Mountain Trail (LMT), une immersion dans l'histoire de mes ancêtres paternels et une rencontre avec des passionnées comme Omar Sakr, directeur général de la Lebanon Mountain Trail Association (LMTA). Son énergie communicative et son amour pour ce sentier me touchent profondément. Il m'apprend alors que certains membres de la LMTA voyageront jusqu'au Canada à l'automne 2024 pour participer à la conférence du World Trails Network, qui se tiendra à Ottawa. Une rencontre qui, comme le LMT lui-même, tisse des liens inattendus entre les cultures et les continents.

C'est alors que germe l'idée d'organiser une randonnée d'une journée au Québec avant le début de la semaine de conférences, afin de rassembler une communauté de personnes enthousiastes et curieuses d'en apprendre davantage sur le LMT. Ce projet me met pour la première fois en contact avec Monique Bassila Zaarour, ambassadrice et membre du conseil d'administration des Canadian Friends of the Lebanon Mountain Trail (CFLMT). L'événement voit ainsi le jour grâce à une collaboration entre des membres de la CFLMT et de la LMTA. La Société des établissements de plein air du Québec (Sépaq) nous accorde également son précieux soutien par le biais de son programme d'engagement social.

Au matin du samedi 28 septembre 2024, une cinquantaine de randonneuses se retrouvent alors au parc national du Mont-Orford pour relever le défi de la boucle du Mont-Chauve, un parcours de 10,6 km. La journée débute par des présentations qui introduisent le LMT et les membres des associations présentes, incluant Omar Sakr, Julie Lebnan et Takla Khoueir de la LMTA, ainsi que Hisham Saab, Hana Saab, Monique Bassila Zaarour et Wafaa El-Osta de la CFLMT. Une garde-parc naturaliste de la Sépaq, Liliانا Ramirez, nous accueille chaleureusement pour partager les secrets du parc : les espèces qui y vivent et les efforts déployés pour préserver sa biodiversité. Marchant le long du sentier, le spectacle des couleurs flamboyantes de l'automne, accompagné d'une météo clémente, transforme cette journée en une expérience féerique. Suivant une pause pique-nique une fois arrivées au sommet, nous clôturons la descente par un moment de détente sur la plage du lac Stukely, sous un soleil radieux.

Bien que le sentier de niveau intermédiaire ait pu représenter un défi pour certaines, les retours sont unanimes : il s'agissait d'une « journée mémorable », marquée par des « moments spéciaux partagés en pleine nature » dans une ambiance « conviviale et chaleureuse ». Alors que les pensées étaient tournées vers le Liban, certaines participantes ont exprimé leur gratitude pour cette parenthèse bienveillante dans un climat d'actualité difficile : « Cette randonnée fut magnifique, les échanges enrichissants, particulièrement en ces temps éprouvants pour le Liban. » Une autre a souligné : « Rencontrer chacune de vous me rend encore plus fière d'être Libanaise. » En pleine nature, la randonnée s'est révélée être une occasion idéale pour nouer de nouvelles relations et cultiver la solidarité.

À la fois porteuse de racines québécoises et libanaises, cet événement fut pour moi une chance inestimable de tisser des liens entre ces deux héritages. Il m'a permis de faire découvrir un aperçu du magnifique territoire québécois à mes chères amies de la LMTA, dont certain-e-s foulaient pour la première fois le sol canadien. En retour, il a offert aux membres de la diaspora libanaise au Québec l'occasion unique de découvrir la LMT, un trésor méconnu qui incarne la beauté et la résilience de leur pays d'origine. Enfin, l'organisation de cet événement – une première qui fut qualifiée de « succès » – était aussi une façon de redonner, en hommage à ce sentier de la LMT qui nous a tant apporté.

À la demande des participantes, une nouvelle tradition de randonnée entre membres et amies de la CFLMT et de la LMTA est née, promettant de nouvelles aventures à chaque saison. Au plaisir de se retrouver pour une prochaine marche ensemble!





TALES FROM THE TRAIL

Tales from the Trail

by Charbel Sattouf

Charbel Sattouf
Record Holder on the LMT



Back in 2021, I embarked on the opportunity of a lifetime: to backpack the entire Lebanon Mountain Trail (LMT). Four years later, it remains one of the greatest achievements of my life.

The journey began on October 20th in Marjaayoun, a village in the south of Lebanon. This was more than just a starting point; it was where I met my grandmother's family for the first time and spent my first night. With my final gear check complete, I woke up at 4 a.m., turned on my headlamp, strapped on my 13-kilogram backpack, and took my first steps. There was no turning back.

For 10 days, I followed the same routine: waking up at 3 a.m., packing up my tent and setting off before sunrise. I strategically began walking in the darkness to avoid seeing the daunting ascents ahead, tricking my mind into pushing through. Nothing, however, compared to the beauty of watching the sunrise each morning. It was a sight so breathtaking; it moved me to tears every single day. The beauty of nature that we tend to forget to be thankful for its presence and for shaping us into the human beings that we are.

This journey was so much more than a physical challenge. It was a personal quest, a chance to discover myself, to explore my limits, my why! And to answer the question, "Why am I even doing all of this?" The answer revealed itself with every step. I was proving to my younger self that I am capable of achieving anything I set my mind to, that limits exist only in our minds. By the sixth day, my body was exhausted, but my mind remained dedicated. I was determined to reach my goal: completing the LMT in 10 days and 8 hours.

Backpacking the LMT was also a cultural immersion. I had the privilege of meeting locals along the trail, sharing stories with shepherds, and witnessing the kindness and resilience of people living in the mountains. This experience taught me to be grateful for even the smallest comforts in life: a hot shower, a comfortable bed, a warm home.

The final day of my journey felt surreal. I had lost count of the days and kilometers I had traversed, but I couldn't believe I was

finally in my hometown, Andaket. The warm welcome from my family overwhelmed me with emotion.

In that moment, I realized that this journey wasn't just about me; it was about inspiring others. I hope my experience inspires anyone with a dream to believe in themselves. We tend to demotivate ourselves when we are usually so close to the summit, but it's at this time that we should push more, fight more and the rest will come right away!

Thank you, so beautiful Lebanese mountains, for teaching me about humbleness and gratefulness!

To many more adventures.



LMT

My Very Own Home Sweet Home

Sari Haddad
LMTA Ambassador to Sydney, Australia



In early 2020, I moved to Sydney after spending four memorable years championing Lebanon's rural tourism scene through my initiative, Lebanese Wanderers. This initiative played a significant role in reviving Lebanon's villages, turning hidden gems into sought-after destinations. The movement brought together organizations and communities, with the Lebanon Mountain Trail Association (LMTA) serving as its backbone.

My journey with the LMTA began at 16 when former LMTA President Maya Karkour and her team visited my school, introducing us to the trail and organizing a memorable weekend trip. That experience left an indelible mark on me, sparking a passion that would resurface years later.

I initially pursued engineering as a degree, following in my father's footsteps, but struggled with the coursework and found my calling in hospitality, much to my parents' dismay. During my studies, a trip to Qadisha Valley with my class opened my eyes to Lebanon's natural beauty. This experience, along with others like caving in Aaqoura, turned hiking into a hobby. My friends and I began exploring Lebanon's villages, documenting our adventures on social media. The overwhelming response to our posts—questions like "Where is this?" and "Take me with you!"—inspired us to launch Lebanese Wanderers, a platform dedicated to showcasing Lebanon's rural landscapes, small businesses, and hidden gems.

Our content quickly went viral, drawing attention to places that had long been overlooked. Bakeries we featured began having lines of customers, and what started as road trips with friends evolved into organized group tours. We connected people from different regions of Lebanon, fostering a sense of unity and discovery. Throughout this journey, the LMTA remained a trusted guide, its team providing us with trail information, accommodation tips, and local expertise. As our community grew, so did our content creation skills. We collaborated with talented filmmakers and eventually produced an award-winning short film showcased at the Lebanon Mountain Film Festival.

In 2019, I joined the LMTA to manage their social media for the annual thru-hike, spending 16 unforgettable days on the trail. This experience deepened my appreciation for Lebanon's beauty and the emotional connections forged on the trail. The thru-hike brought together hikers, guides, locals, and travelers, each with their own story, creating a symphony of shared experiences. It was a dreamlike journey I wished everyone could experience.

However, Lebanon's challenges soon overshadowed these triumphs. On October 17, 2019, while documenting the Fall Trek, the revolution erupted in Beirut. I felt compelled to join the movement, hoping for a better future. But as the revolution waned and the country faced one crisis after another, I made the difficult decision to leave Lebanon. In February 2020, I arrived in Sydney, grappling with survivor's guilt as my friends continued to fight for justice back home. The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic only deepened my sense of helplessness.

In August 2020, I returned to Beirut, unaware of the catastrophic explosion that had just occurred. I arrived to a city in ruins, my Airbnb destroyed, and the streets filled with rubble and broken glass. For a month, I worked alongside others to clean up the city, but it felt like applying a bandage to a gaping wound. The experience was devastating, but it also clarified my purpose: to grow stronger and more capable so I could one day contribute to Lebanon's recovery.

Returning to Sydney, I channeled my energy into personal growth. I joined 6HEAD, a prestigious steakhouse overlooking Sydney Harbour, owned by a South African Lebanese family. There, I connected with the Lebanese diaspora, hearing stories of love, loss, and resilience. These interactions reinforced my desire to bridge the gap between the Lebanon they remembered and the Lebanon I knew—a country of beauty, resilience, and untapped potential. My journey continues, driven by the hope of one day making a meaningful impact on Lebanon's future.

THANK YOU TO ALL OUR DONORS AND PARTNERS WHO CONTRIBUTED TO THE LMTA DURING 2024!

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in Euros

€50,000 - €75,000

Molecaten (Netherlands)

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in USD

\$30,000 - \$99,999

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Ways to Support Us

Find out how you can support us: via an annual donation, through a membership, by becoming a Trail keeper and more!

LMTA welcomes both cash and in-kind donations.

GENERAL DONATION

Your one-off or annual donation will go to our General Fund, which is used for projects with a high impact on communities or work most urgently needed on the Trail: lebanontrail.org/donation

SPONSOR ONE OF OUR PROJECTS

By sponsoring one of our programs, you can make a real difference in trail preservation and you can make a lasting impact on trail-side communities across Lebanon. Project-focused support will allow you to direct your donated funds to a particular area of interest or to a specific project dear to your heart and see the impact of your contribution.

Our main programs are:

Trail & Conversation / Community Development / Education / Natural & Cultural Heritage / Advocacy

JOIN OUR MEMBERSHIP PROGRAM

[Become a member](#) and you'll join a growing group of supporters determined to make sure that our national Trail, our natural and cultural heritage are valued and protected. There are currently two membership options:

- Supporting Member
- Lifetime Adrian Member

Please contact our office for full details. You can pay by bank transfer, money remittance or by visiting the LMTA office.

BECOME A TRAIL KEEPER

Thanks to our *Trail Keepers*, we are closer to our **fund-raising goal to**

protect the main linear trail as well as side trails, connecting trails or thematic trails. You can support us in our mission to preserve and maintain the LMT by becoming a Trail Keeper.

Sponsor 1 km of any of the LMT trails for \$350.

"Becoming a trail keeper is a way for us to share with our friends our love for the Lebanese mountains by bringing awareness to the added value of the LMTA and by being part of their pool of supporters who make this such a successful and incredible venture."

- Peter & Nathalie Hrechdakian

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Show your customers and staff that your company supports a leading NGO with far-reaching sustainable programs.

For more information, please contact:

Ms Sawsan Haddad at info@lebanontrail.org

Or contact:

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SUPPORT THE LMTA FROM THE USA

The American Friends of the LMT (AFLMT) is an independent non-profit organization. Its aim is to strengthen ties between Lebanon, particularly trail-side communities, and Lebanese Americans and American hikers and friends of Lebanon, as well as to facilitate donations to the LMTA from the US. Donations made through AFLMT are tax-deductible in the US as applicable by law.

For more information, please refer to the AFLMT website.

For those who prefer to donate by check, please make your check payable

to "American Friends of the LMT" and mail it to:

Mr. Joseph Karam
AFLMT President
1300 Wilson Blvd, Suite 920
Arlington, VA 22209
info@afllmt.org

Please request a confirmation receipt of your donation for your tax records.

PLANNED GIVING

Planned gifts enable LMTA lovers to create a powerful philanthropic legacy by making a direct impact on trail sustainability, natural and cultural conservation or any of our far-reaching programs. Planned giving can be tailor made to respond to your wishes to support our work and mission. For more information, please contact Alfred Farwagi at farwagialfred@gmail.com



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