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Maronite Academy: YearEbook 2013

Wednesday, 15 May 2013

Students' Experience with the Maronite Academy's Trip

Topic: 3) Experience w/Trip

Write a paragraph (of at least 150 words) about your experience with the Maronite Academy's Educational Trip to Lebanon in summer 2013.

PS: If you prefer to submit a video of yourself talking about your experience, let me know and I will post it for you. The best video(s) will win a prize.

Due Date: July 29, 2013

[Click on "Post Comment" below, on the right, in order to introduce yourself.]

Click on "View Comments" below, on the right, to read about the students' experiences.

Let me know if you have any questions or suggestions.

All the best!

Nada S. Abisamra
Executive Director

Posted by maroniteacademy at 1:11 AM EDT

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Wednesday, 15 May 2013 - 1:13 AM EDT

Name: "Nada"

I hope your trip to Lebanon with the Maronite Academy will truly be a Trip of a Lifetime!

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Saturday, 27 July 2013 - 5:22 AM EDT

Name: "Paul yazbeck"

My experience in Lebanon this year is absolutely unprecedented. I have been to Lebanon several times, I thought I have seen it all but I guess not. There is still so much about this country that I do not know, and I can thank the Maronite academy for helping me branch out. I have never been educated about Lebanon on such a level until now. The best part about my trip, was being able to experience Lebanon with people who have

never experienced Lebanon. Being able to share culture and retract back to my roots with other nationals is such an amazing feeling. Also, being a part of the Maronite academy has helped me realize how important it is to be Lebanese and also how important it is to preserve Lebanon. If we don't do something now, who will?

2013-07-27

12:21:57

[Reply to this Comment](#)

Saturday, 27 July 2013 - 5:26 AM EDT

Name: "Samantha Maron"

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My experience with the Maronite Academy's Educational Trip to Lebanon has been such an enriching and educational experience. Being Lebanese has always been a part of who I am, but I was never fully aware of what it meant. After participating in this trip and visiting sites with such immense historical and cultural significance, I am sure I now understand what it means to be Lebanese. I have learned more about myself as an individual and have acquired a deeper understanding of my heritage and ancestry. Not only has it been an inspirational trip for me, but also to the other students who participated. I met amazing individuals who are all similar to me. We are proud to be Lebanese and will continue in our journey to sustain Lebanon and all of its history. Although I am sad to leave, I look forward to returning back to the States where I will register my siblings and I as Lebanese citizens. I also am eager to share all of the knowledge I have obtained with my fellow peers in my country of residence. I would like to thank the Maronite Academy once again for giving me the opportunity to discover and learn about my country and roots!

[Reply to this Comment](#)

Saturday, 27 July 2013 - 5:28 AM EDT

Name: "anonymous"

My experience in Lebanon has been phenomenal! We were able to visit so

many places in Lebanon and it was a very well organized trip. I am grateful that I was able to see so many sacred sites in Lebanon so I can truly know where my ancestors come from. This was a very well balanced trip of fun and learning. I was able to see how beautiful Lebanon is and now feel I have a much better understanding and appreciation for the country and for where my ancestors come from!

[Reply to this Comment](#)

Saturday, 27 July 2013 - 5:28 AM EDT

Name: "Melissa zeidan"

Melissa Zeidan - Australia

My experience with the Maronite Academy's education trip to Lebanon in 2013 was absolutely awesome!

I came to Lebanon about 14 years ago and I could only remember a few things so coming to Lebanon with the Maronite Academy this summer was a whole new experience for me. It was nice to visit all these sacred sites and famous places that I had never been to or even heard of before. Each place had an important story behind it and it was very interesting hearing why each place we visited was important and what it means to not only the Christians but the Maronites.

It was a great opportunity to meet other young Lebanese Maronites from around the world and everyone was so friendly and got along so well.

This trip made me appreciate Lebanon so much and I am so proud to say I am Lebanese! I love Lebanon and I love knowing and learning about my own Lebanese roots and where my parents grew up and came from.

This was truly a trip of a lifetime! Best experience of my life!

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Saturday, 27 July 2013 - 5:28 AM EDT

Name: "Fadi Khourieh"

My experience with the foundation has been an exceptional life lesson. The Maronite Foundation placed an excellent program from the get-go, from the weekly question answering, to the dedication of members. The pre Lebanon was educational, the actual trip had taught me the true identity of my Country and cultural and the realization of the importance to be proud and active in being Lebanese.

The two weeks in Lebanon, shows you people whom are just like you world-wide and how much you can relate. The trips and sites were absolutely astonishing. Lebanon is definitely a must to visit and to take in the culture. The foundation has amazing people like Nada Abisamra, Abouna Fadi Kmeid and the remainder of the organization whom dedicated their time and efforts to make this absolutely amazing!

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Saturday, 27 July 2013 - 5:30 AM EDT

Name: "Thomas Shiver"

This truly was a milestone experience in my life. Just like the first time I came to Lebanon, we saw so very much in such a short span of time, and it just flew by due to my thorough enjoyment of every single day. I will never forget many of my experiences from this time, and will carry the friends I made with me each and every day for a long time to come.

[Reply to this Comment](#)

Saturday, 27 July 2013 - 5:30 AM EDT

Name: "Christina Magri"

My experience in Lebanon has been phenomenal! We were able to visit so many places in Lebanon and it was a very well organized trip. I am grateful that I was able to see so many sacred sites in Lebanon so I can truly know where my ancestors come from. This was a very well balanced trip of fun and learning. I was able to see how beautiful Lebanon is and now feel I have a much better understanding and appreciation for the country and for where my ancestors come from!

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Saturday, 27 July 2013 - 5:32 AM EDT

Name: "Theresa Trad"

Knowing I was one of the selected students chosen to visit Lebanon was exciting alone, but I definitely had no idea what to expect. This trip was extremely impressive. I've learned things I wish I knew before. We've gotten the chance to see parts of Lebanon that we probably would have never seen on our own. It was an absolute joy to meet people from all around the world. Learning about everyone's experiences and ways of life all around the world, was an excellent way of bringing people together. I was taught about how amazing Lebanon really is and why we need to do everything we can to keep it amazing. I appreciate being part of this organization and I'm looking forward to being part of all the wonderful things we will do together.

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Saturday, 27 July 2013 - 5:37 AM EDT**Name:** "João Hage"

Prior to joining the Maronite Academy's Educational Trip to Lebanon, I had spent a total of 7 months in Lebanon throughout my life. Also, as someone who studies the history and politics of the Middle East (specifically Lebanon), I realized after joining this trip that there is still a lot I do not know about Lebanon's special history. The Maronites were an integral part in the formation of Lebanon, and their ability to survive as a strong Christian community in the Middle East is astonishing. I know a lot about Lebanon, but this trip allowed me to connect with my ancestors, understand Lebanon's struggle and the struggle of the Maronites, and allowed me to form a bond with my place of origin. We visited several churches and holy sites, where we learned about their histories and importances. We were given the opportunity to appreciate Lebanon's beauty through its culture, its people, its food, and its nightlife. In the months leading up to the trip, we interacted with fellow students and our instructors through the online platform; but it was a pleasure to be able to meet and learn from our instructors throughout our trip in Lebanon.

I have lived my entire life in the United States, but have always felt more Lebanese than American; however, it has always been difficult for me to explore my Lebanese side. The Maronite Academy showed me a new side of Lebanon, one rich with tradition, history, and passion. It also gave me the opportunity to form friendships with other Lebanese descendents, similar to myself, from around the world. These newly formed connections will surely last a lifetime!

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Saturday, 27 July 2013 - 5:37 AM EDT**Name:** "Sarah"

Our trip to Lebanon was an incredible experience. We had the chance to visit a lot of beautiful places. We got to know the country of our ancestors and we got closer to our roots. Also, I will really miss our group dynamic. It was a chance to meet all of you guys. We come from all around the world but we have a common ground. The thought of going back home makes me sad. I can't wait to come back here!

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Saturday, 27 July 2013 - 5:41 AM EDT**Name:** "Mariam DeLand"

I am the third generation born in the USA. I had a strong Lebanese identity, but no attachment to Lebanon. I had a strong identity as Maronite and a deep spirituality, but no knowledge or appreciation of the significance of the historic struggle of the Maronites for survival. I read in my lessons about these topics and I was inspired to check out other materials and sources. I can't express the pride that I developed through this process. Then, to travel Lebanon and see these sites was a spiritual experience.

I am inspired by the goals of the Maronite Foundation! Lebanon's governmental structure is unique in the world and is a model for other countries. However, in the words of Mr. Hage and other members of the foundation, there is no Lebanon without the Maronites.

On top of all this, I experienced the pace of life in Lebanon-the work/life balance, evenings in cafes and restaurants with friends, relaxation on sunny beaches. These people know how to live! The Maronite cause will be a life-long mission and trips to Lebanon will be a life-long priority!

Thank you, Maronite Foundation for believing that this was a worthwhile effort! I feel so lucky and blessed!

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Saturday, 27 July 2013 - 5:41 AM EDT

Name: "Kathy Kuzni"

I cannot even begin to describe the amazing experiences that I have had these last 13 days. This group has become more than 28 strangers- we have become a family. With my new family, we have shared experiences that no one could have ever imagined. I have visited Lebanon a few times, but never have I: met the patriarch, met the president, hiked Qadisha Valley, or ate at the famous Abdul Wahab. Basically, this trip exceeded all my hopes and dreams of seeing Lebanon's beauty unfold with all this amazing history. Thanks MARONITE ACADEMY for allowing me to take part of this wonderful journey! Class of 2013- we did itttt! Best of luck to class of 2014!

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Saturday, 27 July 2013 - 5:44 AM EDT

Name: "Alicia Massad"

This experience was a trip of a lifetime. We got to visit places even locals have never experienced themselves. The first day we went to "Les Caves de Ksara" in Zahle and learned how Lebanese wine was made. We also had a wine tasting event. When we went to Harissa it was a very beautiful moment in my life. I've always had a relationship with Mother Mary and

to go and see her at Harissa really meant a lot to me. Doing the hike in Qadicha Valley was a real eye opener. To see what my ancestors had to do to keep their faith is very touching. The hardships and courage they had made me proud to be of Lebanese decent. I am very thankful for this opportunity and that the foundation has given me.

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Saturday, 27 July 2013 - 5:44 AM EDT

Name: "Layla Yazbeck"

I have visited Lebanon several times before, but have never had an experience like this. Traveling to Lebanon with 28 other Lebanese from all over the world was truly a trip of a lifetime. Upon our arrival two weeks ago we began with an introduction to foundation and were given the schedule for the journey that was about to embark. With the group, I visited the sacred sites that we had been studying about since January. It was wonderful to be able to take everything that I had learned about the history of the Maronites and Lebanon and to see it play out in real life. For example, visiting the Qadicha valley and hiking through Quannoubine was a very surreal moment for me. This is the land that our Maronite forefathers had walked, lived, and suffered; to be able to walk in their footsteps is a feeling too strong for words. Aside from visiting places in Lebanon, the conferences held were also a great experience. I learned the mission of the Maronite Foundation and what their vision of the future is. I was able to understand the needs analysis of the Foundation and their efforts to preserve Lebanon.

Tomorrow is our last day and it is a bittersweet feeling. I am sad to depart from this group that I have grown so close to and have come to call my family. However, I am excited to take the knowledge back to the United States and help the vision of the Foundation, and the Lebanese, of Lebanon's future become a reality.

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Saturday, 27 July 2013 - 5:46 AM EDT

Name: "Michelle Haddad"

My experience within the two weeks I've been here is awesome! There are no words to express how thankful I am to the Maronite academy to have this opportunity. They have open my eyes to new horizons. I never thought Lebanon could hold so much history, so much beauty.

One of my biggest dreams has always been to visit Lebanon, to visit its mountains and beaches, to feel its soil, to pay tribute to its historical and cultural monuments and artifacts.

Visiting Lebanon with an organized and dedicated group such as the Maronite Academy and the twenty eights students is beyond my wildest dreams.

Within the first week we had visited some of the monasteries that I read about through the online sessions, the villages and towns that were instrumental in the advancement of the Lebanese Maronites.

I believe we ALL feel connected to their courage and their perseverance. I am very thankful for all of the knowledge that I now have and am committed to nurturing the connection to Lebanon forever.

Everyone should know their roots, culture, and heritage, the key to success is knowledge.

"KNOWLEDGE IS POWER"

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Saturday, 27 July 2013 - 5:50 AM EDT

Name: "Waseem Khourieh"

This trip truly has been a trip that I will never forget! It has given me the opportunity to experience the culture and heritage of my father and to see the land in which he grew up in. I have a new found appreciation for Lebanon and a new found pride in being Lebanese. As a bonus I have met so many new people that have made this experience that much more meaningful and enjoyable. I will never forget the bonds that have been made during this trip. As a group we experienced what it means to be Lebanese and what it means to pass on our culture to our children. Thank you to Nada Abisamra and the Maronite Foundation for helping me experience my Lebanese heritage!!

[Reply to this Comment](#)

Saturday, 27 July 2013 - 5:57 AM EDT

Name: "Carolyn Aboubechara"

From the bottom of my heart, I greatly thank the Maronite Foundation for giving me the opportunity of a lifetime. The educational trip was amazing and on various occasions caused my tears of joy, happiness and pride to fall. I discovered the importance of our heritage and depth of our faith and history through the visit of several historic churches that date back hundreds of years. The Qadisha Valley was the most amazing experience where I saw the origins of Maronites. I learned that it is the area where Maronites struggled to keep their identity, their heritage, and their faith. They preserved their freedom through living a hard life in the difficult mountain life. Also, I would have never dreamt of the idea of meeting the President and Patriarch, and I had the privilege to do so through the Maronite Academy, and it instilled in me the pride, passion, and motivation to be continuously involved in the Lebanese cause and to promote Lebanon as a country, as a holy land, and as an example of democracy and way of life. This was honestly an amazing educational and spiritual trip that had a major influence on

my life.

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Saturday, 27 July 2013 - 6:06 AM EDT

Name: "Jessica Aoun"

My experience with the Maronite Academy was incredible and amazing. Like many in the group, it's not my first time in Lebanon, but it is the first time I learn so much about my roots and my heritage. I am pretty sure that it is not the last time I will visit Lebanon and I will learn even more and more each time I will come. It was a great opportunity to meet Maronites people from all over the world and made new friendship. I am very blessed that I was able to see many places and sacred sites in a such short of time. Lebanon is a wonderful country to visit and I hope that anyone who has the chance to come, will come and see how beautiful it is. A big thank you to Ms. Hiam Boustani, Ms. Nada Abi-Samra, Father Fadi Kmeid, Robert Matta and the other members of the foundation that dedicated their time and effort to make this possible.

[Reply to this Comment](#)

Saturday, 27 July 2013 - 6:08 AM EDT

Name: "Christine Boumoussa"

It is surreal to be commenting about the trip, as it comes to an end. Our time in Lebanon has been nothing short of a dream come true but I can't believe it's almost over! First off, travel accommodations from the airport to the university where we slept were coordinated so that each of us had nothing to worry about from the moment we landed in Lebanon. We were each given a detailed itinerary of our daily activities listing all the places we would be visiting at specific designated times. Just by looking at the itinerary you can see that in our time here we have seen more of Lebanon than one would think is possible. I am truly touched by all the Churches and holy sites we've visited. Words cannot express the close connection that the Maronites have to Lebanon. If it is not a historical church every few blocks, then it is a small chapel created by the locals. It makes you realize how intertwined our faith is to the physical land of

Lebanon and moreover how important the history of Lebanon is to our faith. We visited many popular tourist attractions and better yet, places most people have never heard of. It is important to point out that each place we visited was thoroughly explained to us by either Abouna Kmeid or another native. It was awesome to listen as each person spoke to with conviction and passion making it impossible for us not to feel the pride they exuded. Each day I learn more than I did the day before. There is nothing like seeing the sunset over the mountains while you're above the clouds. No picture can capture the beauty of Lebanon and no words can express the overwhelming hospitality the people of Lebanon extend to otherwise complete strangers. I have fallen in love with Lebanon and I am so thankful for this experience. This was my first trip to Lebanon but it is the first of MANY to come!!

[Reply to this Comment](#)

Saturday, 27 July 2013 - 6:37 AM EDT

Name: "Evonna Boumoussa "

To be completely honest, I never thought we'd actually get the chance to go to Lebanon at the end of the course. When I received the ticket, I was in shock because I've been waiting and wanting to go to Lebanon since I was a little girl. I don't get the opportunity to travel much, so from the moment I entered the airport up until this point, I still can't believe this is all real. This trip has been one of a lifetime! It is absolutely surreal being here and experiencing the life my family once lived and told me about repeatedly. It has been truly amazing visiting all the historic and religious sites and gaining so much knowledge about Lebanon. I never would have had this experience without being involved in this program, and I know I am blessed because of it. I am immensely appreciative and thankful to the Maronite Academy for this opportunity,

especially Nada Abisamra and Abouna Kmeid!

[Reply to this Comment](#)

Saturday, 27 July 2013 - 7:06 AM EDT

Name: "Helio Mokarzel"

This experience has been nothing short of marvelous. I am 3rd generation Brazilian born and therefore, far removed from Lebanon's glory, but none the less equally as proud as Lebanese from Lebanon. I want to thank this organization from the bottom of my heart. I have met some incredible lifelong friends and visited some of the most amazing places. To the Maronite Academy.. You goal has been achieved in me! Long, Live Lebanon!!!

[Reply to this Comment](#)

Saturday, 27 July 2013 - 6:11 PM EDT

Name: "Miriam Moussallem"

My experience with the educational trip was more than amazing. I have been to Lebanon before, 3 years ago. I have been to many holy places but it has never been that spiritual for me. This time I visited more different places than those I have been to during my last visit. The spiritual experience was much more deeper esp. when we visited Mar Charbel , my favorite saint's place at Annaya and spent the night in the oasis.. This trip has not only touched me on spiritual basis, but also many relaxing and recreational programs were launched.. It was a great opportunity to disconnect from the stresses of life and relax . going to the beach and the the Lebanese nights out were experienced for the first time here in Lebanon.. Visiting factories and museums and knowing about many industries that amazed me when I first learned about them. Seeing the real spirit, the most beautiful spirit of the real Lebanese people. How much beautiful and kind they are. And no matter what the hardships they may face, they always keep their beautiful spirit with the smile that never departs their face. My experience with Lebanon this time is totally different. I am more than lucky to have been chosen to be a member of this amazing group, being part of the Maronite body and soul. Going through the course taught us all a lot of valuable information about my ancestors. And all the way through the trip, from which I have learned alot, the most important of which is that Lebanon must be kept intact as a Christian country and this will not happen until we all unite as one hand and be sincere in keeping the existence of our beloved Lebanon. I am thankful to every single member of the Maronite academy, who gave too much

time and effort trying to convey the message. On this last day of the trip, I feel that I'm leaving a piece of my heart before I get back home.

[Reply to this Comment](#)

Sunday, 28 July 2013 - 2:08 AM EDT

Name: "Fer Schekaiban"

It is a very difficult thing to explain my experience even in my mother language, but I can say that this trip has given me a lot to think about; it has being not only a journey of the discovery of my family roots, but a way to unearth my self, the way I think about the world, and how Lebanon is calling (and, I am afraid, shouting) for all of us.

I really thanks the Maronite Foundation for this once-in-a-life trip with a lot of great people.

This makes me want to stay closer to my roots, and I am thinking on my returning.

[Reply to this Comment](#)

Sunday, 28 July 2013 - 11:01 AM EDT

Name: "Maria BelÃ©n Morales Azar"

My experience in this trip has been unforgettable!!! I learned more Than a knew about my grabdfather's land. I feel closer of my roots and I'm proud to be Maronite and that my ancestors have been libanese.

I want to Thank to all people who worked so hard for this trip. I congratulate all!! I Really think this is a noble cause to approach us to our identity, to our roots.I want to Thank specially Abouna Fady, Nada and Madam Boustani for transmit to us all of your knowkedge with love and passion. I hope that the others descendents of lebanese can live this experience.

[Reply to this Comment](#)

Sunday, 28 July 2013 - 12:01 PM EDT

Name: "Victor Moussallem"

The trip to Lebanon was an incredible experience; it's one of the best experiences that I've ever had in my life. It was my second time for me in Lebanon, but theoretically speaking it was the first time for me to experiance & explore Lebanon that deep.

We've been to many Christian sites as: St. Charbel church at Zahle, Mar Moussa monastery, Annaya, Our lady of Elige, St. Elias monastery in Jeitta, Harissa, St. Anthony monastery in Kozhaya, Qadicha valley, Deir el Kamar. Many touristic & historic sites as: Les Caves de Ksara, Taanayel Ecolodge, Beirut souks, Zeitounay bay, Jeitta Grotto, Gibran museum, Cedars forest, Byblos, Fossils museum & Jezzine.

The trip was also full of fun as we went to the beach at ATCL & swam in the Mediterranean, biked around the lake in Tannayel, took teleferique towards Harissa, escaladed & rappelled at Kfardebian & planted a tree at the Cedars forest.

We attended several conferences covering the economic aspects of migration, registration to become Lebanese & the Maronites' history & influences & other brainstorming & (Q&A) sessions.

The trip was well-organized & the coordinators dedicated so much time & effort for the trip & were very helpful; Thank you all & Thanks to the Maronite Foundation ☺.

[Reply to this Comment](#)

Sunday, 28 July 2013 - 12:10 PM EDT

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