

# From Hima to Hima

Covering the Bekaa Area



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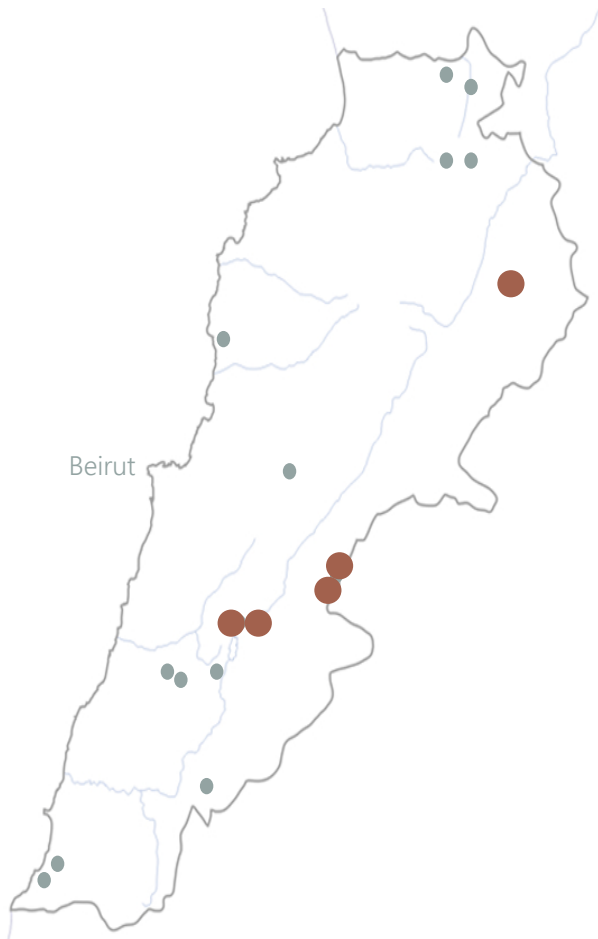
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“From Hima to Hima - covering the Bekaa Area” is an eco-touristic model, initiated by SPNL, aiming to link the different Hima sites in the Bekaa region. It highlights the natural, cultural and social values embedded within the Hima areas which are managed by the local community; the custodians of the land. This booklet provides you with a snapshot of several ecotourism packages that you and your family can enjoy within our Bekaa Himas. SPNL envisions “From Hima to Hima” model to connect all sites that SPNL is working on.



Photo by: Assaad Saleh



A Snapshot of the six Hima sites presented in this booklet

# Anjar

Location: Zahle District in the Bekaa Governorate

Distance from Beirut: 60km

Distance from Zahle: 16 km

Elevation from sea level: 900 m

Population: 3,500

Surrounding villages: Bar Elias and Houch Ammiq

Water sources: Nabaa Anjar and Chamseen

Declared as a Hima: 2008



Anjar is characterized by its distinguished habitat a mixture between wetlands, woodlands and agricultural fields. This differentiation was crucial for the breeding of the globally threatened Syrian Serin bird species which led SPNL - BirdLife partner in Lebanon to announce the area as an important bird and biodiversity area (IBBA).





Anjar is characterized as a World Heritage Site due to the discovered old Umayyad city in 1948.

The old city was established by the Caliph Al Walid Ben Abdel Malek between the years 705 and 715. The city is an example of an inland commercial center at the cross lands of two important routes, one linking Beirut to Damascus and the other linking Homs to Palestine crossing the Bekaa Valley.

## What can you do in Anjar?

- Visit the old Umayyad City
- Discover the Armenian settlement
- Do bird and animal watching
- Tour on bicycles
- Take a boat ride
- Visit agricultural fields
- Taste Armenian cuisine
- Camp in the Hima forest
- Discover a karst cave
- Hike along the Anti-Lebanon Mountains
- Hike along the river and the wetland
- Learn about water and wetlands
- Learn about Armenian crafts



## Kfar Zabad

Location: Zahle District in the Bekaa Governorate

Distance from Beirut: 62 km

Distance from Zahle: 10 km

Distance from Syrian borders: 1 km

Elevation from sea level: 986 m

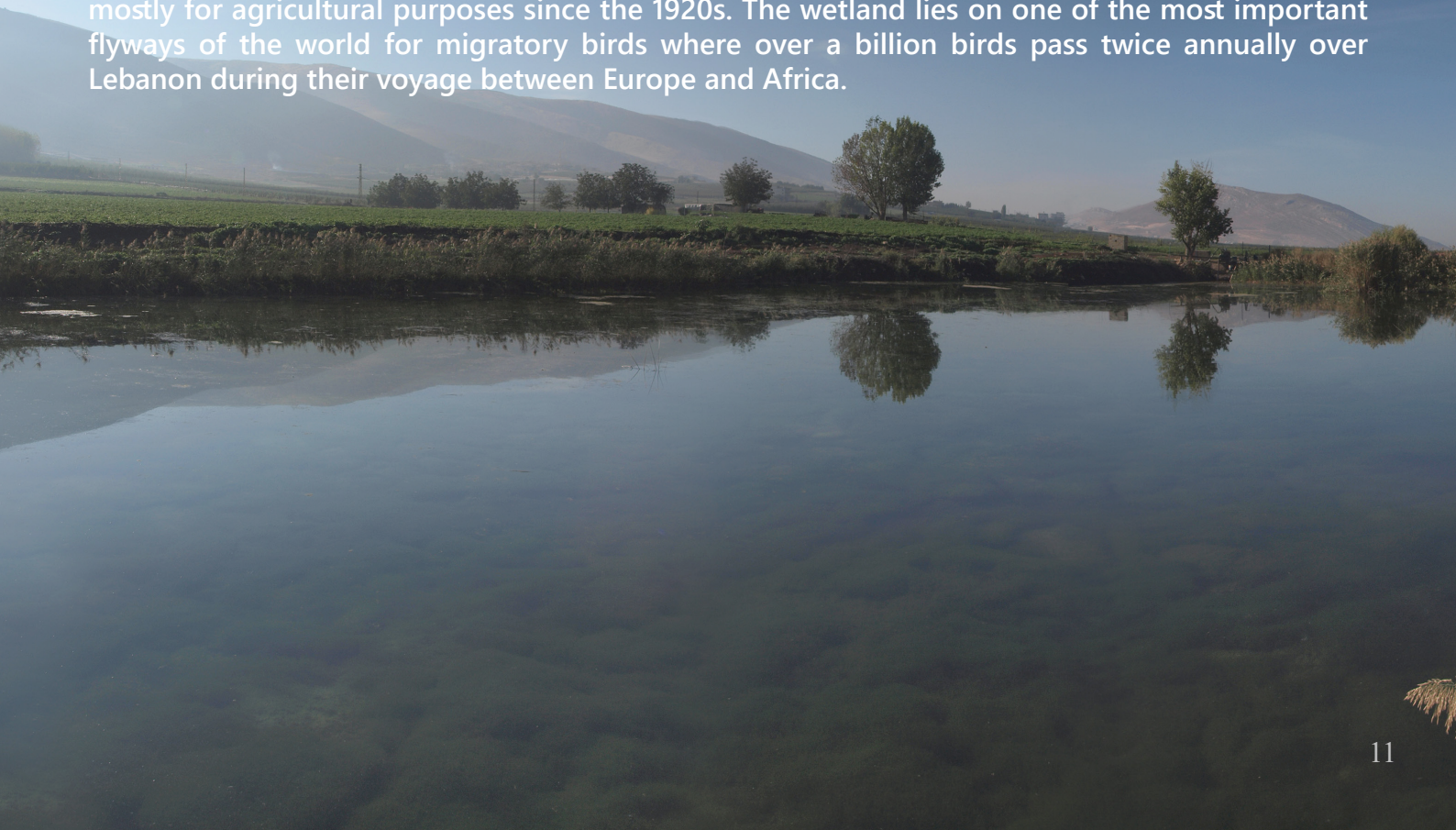
Population: 8,000

Surrounding villages: Ain Kfar Zabad, Anjar and Bar Elias

Water sources: Ma'asaya and Shamsein and Ghozayel

Declared as a Hima: 2004

Anjar / Kfar Zabad wetlands are among the unique marshlands of the Bekaa Valley, they are comprised of springs and rivers. They are the extension of the Ammiq wetland, an important bird and biodiversity area (IBBA) and a Ramasar site, they are the remnants of the large wetland dried mostly for agricultural purposes since the 1920s. The wetland lies on one of the most important flyways of the world for migratory birds where over a billion birds pass twice annually over Lebanon during their voyage between Europe and Africa.





The area of Hima Anjar / Kfar Zabad covers the whole important bird and biodiversity area (IBBA) that constitutes the wetlands in addition to the agricultural lands. This area is highly rich in its unique biodiversity with more than 138 bird species, and a number of globally threatened fauna and flora; including the Syrian Serin bird, river otter, jungle cat and wild cat and the yellow iris.

Anjar / Kfar Zabad wetlands are the last publicly owned wetlands in the Bekaa valley.

## What can you do in Kfar Zabad?

- Hike along the wetland
- Watch animals and birds
- Bike along agricultural fields
- Learn about agriculture
- Camp
- Ride a donkey
- Visit a farm
- Meet the Bedouins
- Practice yoga



Kfar Zabad is known for its fertile soil and fresh crops. Agriculture is a major income generating activity in this area. Locals grow different types of crops including potatoes, tomatoes, corn, cabbage, lettuce, wheat and fruit trees.





Photo by: Asaad Saleh

Kfar Zabad is also an important area for grazing which is a very old cultural practice. Shepherds of Kfar Zabad move with their herds horizontally towards Tarshish and back for the purpose of sustainable grazing.

Kherbet Kanafar and Ain Zebde are adjacent villages that share the same views and characteristics.

## **Kherbet Kanafar**

Location: West Bekaa

Distance from Beirut: 65 km

Distance from Zahle: 32 km

Distance from Syrian borders: 19 km

Elevation from sea level: 1020m

Population: 4,000

Surrounding villages: Ain Zebde and Kefraya

Water sources: Artesian well

Declared as a Hima: 2014

## **Ain Zebde**

Location: West Bekaa

Distance from Beirut: 65 km

Distance from Zahle: 36 km

Distance from Syrian borders: 20 km

Elevation from sea level: 1088 m

Population: 3,500

Surrounding villages: Saghbine and Kherbet Kanafar

Water sources: Spring and Artesian well

Declared as a Hima: 2014

Kherbet Kanafar and Ain Zebde are important ecological sites since they represent an extension for the Chouf Cedars Biosphere Reserve located on its eastern side. These villages are in a rural area that depends mainly on agriculture and grazing as its economic source of living.



Kherbet Kanafar and Ain Zebde represent a bottleneck for migratory birds situated at the narrowest Lebanese territory between Mount Hermon and Mount Lebanon, which makes it one of our top priority sites for conservation and Hima revival in Lebanon.



The area is also known for the West Bekaa Country Club, a great resort located at the heart of the Hima site hosting several recreation activities such as horseback riding, tiro, swimming, hiking and responsible hunting. The area surrounding the resort has been declared by SPNL and the municipality of Kherbet Kanafar as a public responsible hunting area. In addition, the site is known to be a grazing route where several shepherds live there, and depend on livestock and selling dairy product for living.



## Fekha

Location: North of the Bekaa Governorate

Distance from Beirut: 135 km

Distance from Baalbek: 40 km

Elevation from sea level: 900 m

Population: 12,000 - 16,000

Surrounding villages: Al Ain, Qaa and Ras Baalbek

Water sources: Fekha's spring and artesian well

Declared as a Hima: 2013



It gave birth to the village of Jdeydet el-Fekha, the village of el-Maallaqa and the extension of ez-Zeitoun, all grouped under the municipality of El-Fekha/Jdeydet el-Fekha, and laying at the foot of the Anti-Lebanon Mountain Range.

This region is characterized by a semi-desert landscape announcing the start of the "ash-Sham" desert in Syria. The climate is continental, with dry air and high temperature range in summer dueled with low range in winter, and characterized by important temperature differences between day and night. The annual average rainfall is about 250mm.





The northern part of the Anti-Lebanon Mountain range has globally threatened species of flora and fauna. It constitutes a priority Key Biodiversity Area which has a degraded natural ecosystem that suffered from overgrazing for hundreds of years, leading to desertification. This situation is aggravated by the continuous overstocking and overgrazing practices in addition to the semi-desert climatic situation prevailing in the region.

This marginalized area has one of the highest concentrations of transhumance, grazing practices and intense hunting in Lebanon. It has been declared as Hima site to reduce the grazing and hunting threatening activities, and to empower the local communities for a better natural resources management.

The handmade carpet of el-Fekha is a unique handicraft that has been perpetuated after its introduction to the Bekaa in the eighteenth century during the Ottoman occupation.

Nearly every house had a loom operating in this part of the Beqaa valley. Sheep wool was found in abundance in that area and the technique was absorbed by the women of the village.

The colors were extracted from nature and the craftswomen used to dye the wool in large containers on wood fire near the water canal. Today, imported chemical colors are used.

Unfortunately, the result is different. SPNL promotes the use of natural dye techniques in the new designs of El-Fekha carpet.

Carpet weaver:  
Nahla Souccariye 70 831269



## Qaraoun

Location: Rashaya District in the Governorate of Bekaa

Distance from Beirut: 85 km

Distance from Zahle: 40 km

Distance from Syrian borders: 30 km

Elevation from sea level: 790 m

Population: 7,000

Surrounding villages: Majdel Balhis, Aitanite and Baaloul

Water sources: Qaraoun Dam and Litani River

Declared as a Hima: 2014



Lake Qaraoun is a man-made lake surrounded by agricultural land on a primary level and rangeland, hunting area, and tourism on a secondary level. It is the largest freshwater body in Lebanon, lying at the Southern end of the Bekaa valley, which is a continuation of the Rift valley itself, a well – documented flyway for raptors and other soaring birds. In 1959, the Lake was formed by the damming of the Litani River flowing south.

Observations suggest that over 20,000 raptors, storks, pelicans and other soaring birds pass over the lake annually. The threats that this area is suffering from are hunting, water pollution, over-grazing, and disturbance of birds.





The total area of the Qaraoun Lake is 11.9 km<sup>2</sup>. Several species of conservation concern have been recorded in this area. A dam at the southern end of the lake results in a steep descent of the valley floor, soaring birds are therefore vulnerable to hunters as they fly low over this area.

Photo by: Assaad Saleh

## What can you do in Qaraoun?

- Hike along the lake
- Watch animals and birds
- Bike along agricultural fields
- Learn about agriculture
- Camp
- Take a boat ride
- Responsible hunting



# Things to do

There are plenty of things to keep you busy and entertained while visiting all these villages, from walking to canoeing and fishing to snowshoeing.

The biodiversity of those villages provides you and your family an opportunity to explore its different ecosystems and spot some unique wildlife.



# Agricultural Activities

A visit to the cultivated fields is always a fun way to learn about the different crops and produce of the region. You could also share the farmers in agricultural activities such as picking and planting.

## Picking Seasons:

June| Wheat

July| Apricot, Cherry, Almond

July - October| Cucumber, Zucchini

July - November| Cabbage, Lettuce, Potato

August - September| Corn, Plum

August - October| Tomato, Pepper, Eggplant

September| Pear

September - October| Apple

October| Grapes and Walnuts

November| Olives

Location: Anjar / Kfar Zabad, Fekha and Qaraoun  
Prices depend on the season and the crop availability.





# Archery

Archery is not only an activity for adults, it is a great activity that focuses on skills, accuracy and of course a lot of fun!

Using the bow and arrow to aim at a target requires a lot of attention and concentration.

Location: West Bekaa Country Club  
Price of bow rental: 15,000 LL per 45 minutes

# Biking

The big skies and the glorious landscape are a cycling heaven. It's easy to explore the area on two wheels at your own rhythm.

Anjar and Kfar Zabad offer 25km of suitable biking trails with different levels of difficulties.

The West Bekaa Country Club also provide biking activities for kids and adults.

Location: Anjar / Kfar Zabad, West Bekaa Country Club  
Price of bike rental: 8,000 LL per hour





## Bird Watching

A Bird Watcher is someone who wakes up before the chickens to spot the birds upon sunrise. Wake up early and be in one of the Hima sites in order to get a close glimpse of migratory birds and spot the Syrian Serin, a globally endangered bird species residing in the forested area of the Anjar Ruins.

If you are visiting the area during the spring or autumn you will be lucky to see a lot of migratory birds.

Location: All Himas  
Price of binocular rental: 15,000 LL per hour with a guide for half a day (suitable for 5 or more persons)

# Donkey Rides

With its large ears and long muzzle, a donkey is the perfect rambler and the ideal companion for young school kids. With the donkey's walking rhythm, your kids can explore Hima Kfar Zabad wetlands and the agricultural fields.





## Eat & Drink

There are plenty of restaurants and cafes in the Bekaa area where you can taste real Lebanese food. In Anjar, you can get a glimpse of the generous Armenian cuisine with a Lebanese twist.

Most of the restaurants in Anjar serve fresh trout from local fish hatcheries.

# Fishing

In Anjar, you can now enjoy responsible fishing with your friends and family. It is a great way to test your patience! And to have a memorable day full of surprises!

Location: Anjar  
Price of fishing hook rental: 8,000 LL per 2 hours





# Hiking

There are fantastic places for you and your family to explore on foot.

**Anjar / Kfar Zabad:** You can hike between agricultural fields and marshlands. The water trail is a 4 km trail located along the Shamsine River.

Easy to medium level trail are delineated in Kherbet Kanafar and Ain Zebde.

For an enriched and adventurous hike, we recommend that you be accompanied by a local shepherd or a guide.



## Shepherd Trail Anjar / Kfar Zabad

This Shepherd's trail relates Tarshish to Anjar-Kfar Zabad Himas allowing you to experience a nomadic lifestyle.

Shepherd trail allows you to explore the shepherds' viewpoint. On this trail, you can enjoy the stunning views of the Bekaa Valley, and the mountain covered by old oak trees.

The trajectory is divided into two parts, one from Tarshish to Qaa El Rim, a steep mountain trail of thirteen kilometers; and the second a continuous trail downward from Qaa El Rim to Anjar-Kfar Zabad.

This trail is delineated for fit hikers and it requires a full day.



# Shepherd Trail

## West Bekaa

The shepherd trail is of around 4 km. It begins in Kherbet Kanafar and end in Ain Zebde. It follows a trail that mainly is used by local shepherds.

You will be astonished by the stunning views overlooking the Bekaa valley. On the way, you will pass by the Chateau Kanafar winery.

This hike will take 2 hours and its difficulty level is considered as moderate thus it can be enjoyed by all members of the family.

It is highly advisable to hire a local guide.

Location: Kherbet Kanafar to Ain Zebde  
Guide Fees: 50,000 LL

# Strawberry Trail

Explore the strawberry farm lying on the Anti-Lebanon mountain of Anjar. The farm is located at a rewarding viewing platform which provides you with a panoramic view of the Bekaa Valley. Don't forget to taste the organic delicious strawberries planted by young local farmers. It is an easy walk suitable for your kids and all of your family members. It is approximately 3 kilometers long.



Location: Anjar

Price: 10,000 L.L per person with a minimum of 4 persons



## Otter Trail

Walk the Otter Trail to explore Anjar nature attractions! The trail starts at the Anjar Spring and continues along the agricultural fields, Anjar Forest and wetlands.

The trail allows you to explore the otter's habitat and its current niche, where you can spot it hiding in the fishery of Anjar. Although the Otter feeds on fish thus presenting a major financial burden to the trout nurseries. However, the Armenian community continues to be the guardian of this animal.

The 4.1 kilometers long trail offers several difficulties thus it is suitable for all ages. You might have to pass through the river - you might get wet!

Location: Anjar

Price: 10,000 LL per person with a minimum of 4 persons

# Live Like Locals

Locals know all the out-of-the-way places that you might not discover on your own. They can also give you some great tips to have an incredible experience.

Meeting the shepherds is one of the best ways to get to know the real life of the locals.

In Kherbet Kanafar, you can meet the Karam family where you can help them milk and herd their goats.

You can buy local products from the shepherds to support them economically.





## Paddling a Canoe

Paddle a canoe through the smaller waterways of Anjar / Kfar Zabad River and wetlands - a 3 kilometer silent, reedy adventure.

Your guide will tell you more about the Hima, the river and Otter and its habitat. The guide will also provide you with the specific safety equipment.

This activity is perfect for you and your family since it highlights most of Anjar / Kfar Zabad's natural heritage.

Location: Anjar  
Price: 10,000 LL per person for an hour

# Photography in Nature

Nature photography refers to photography taken outdoors and of natural elements such as wildlife, plants, close-ups of natural scenes and textures.

It puts strong emphasis on the aesthetic value of the photo without forgetting the fun part!





## Rope Activities

This is a great way to connect with nature, both physically and spiritually. Moreover, it tests your balance.

This activity is not only for adults but also for kids as there are different difficulty levels to accommodate all participants.

This is a challenging outdoor personal development and team building activity which usually consists of high and/or low elements. Low elements take place on the ground or only a few feet above the ground. High elements are usually constructed in trees or made of utility poles and require a belay for safety.

Location: West Bekaa Country Club  
Price: 10,000 LL per person

# Snowshoeing and Mountain Skiing

Depending on the snow level, snowshoeing could be done on the slopes of Kherbet Kanafar and Ain Zebde between the oaks trees with stunning view on the Bekaa.

It is always advisable to hire a local guide for such activities.

# HIMA SCHOOL

(School with no walls - SNOW)

School with No Walls (SNOW) program in Anjar / Kfar Zabad and other Himas is an educational program initiated by SPNL in collaboration with its partner Great Escape. The SNOW program is developed for students between 8 and 12, where it consists of several activities including hands on activities and learning through fun. SNOW aims to raise awareness about important bird and biodiversity areas (IBBA) and key biodiversity areas (KBA) habitat and species, to respect nature and appreciate cultural practices and values.





## What Can Kids Do?

(School with no walls - SNOW)

In Anjar and Kfar Zabad:

The area offers several tailor made programs for children. Kids can learn about the biodiversity of the area through a nature walk or through biking along several trails. Different educational activities are offered including: building bird nest, drawing, learning how to do local crafts work, bird and animal watching, kite construction, collage using natural material, molding animal tracks with clay and mud, farming, fishing, discovering the river through canoes, archery and learning about the otter trail.

In Ain Zebde and Kherbet Kanafar:

A complementary program similar to the ones offered in Anjar / Kfar Zabad is provided in Ain Zebde / Kherbet Kanafar. The kids will get the chance to explore a shepherd's life style through exploring the shepherd trail and several livestock activities.



## Events

There is a great deal of exciting local events.

### In Anjar:

- Anjar summer music festival
- Anjar ruins festival
- Memorial Day for the martyrs: September

### In Anjar / Kfar Zabad:

- World Wetland Day in February

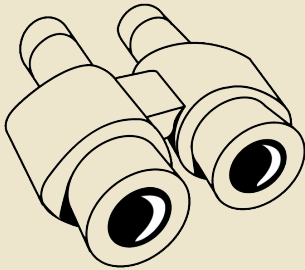
### In all Himas:

- Religious holiday festival in all villages
- National day for protected areas | March 10
- Earth Day | April 22
- International day for endangered species | May 11
- International Day for Biological Diversity | May 22
- World Environmental Day | June 5
- World Wildlife Week | October 1
- International Days for Bird's Watch | October 6
- Lebanese Day for the Environment | November 16
- Tree Planting Day | December 6
- World Day for Biodiversity | December 29

For more information please contact the municipalities

# Extra Activities

**Animal Watching.** If you're lucky and patient enough you may catch a glimpse of wild animals of the area.



**Historical Visits.** It was not until 1949 that the extraordinary discovery of ancient Anjar was made, just outside the modern village in the plain of the Bekaa.



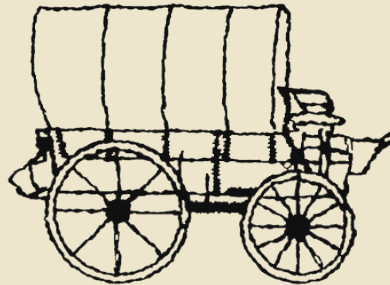
**Religious Visits**



**Visit Hima Kiosk.** SPNL is improving the livelihood of the local community by creating job opportunities, reviving local skills and promoting local products. In the Hima Kiosk, you can find Armenian needlework, handicrafts, handmade accessories, bird nests, traditional food products and SPNL's publications.



**Wagon Rides.** In Anjar you can tour the village in a unique way.



**Yoga.** By practicing outdoors you can establish a link to the environment by adding a different dimension to your practice.



# One Day Packages

We have prepared for you and your families one day packages in all of the Himas listed above.



# ANJAR

## one day tour package

### Village cultural tour:

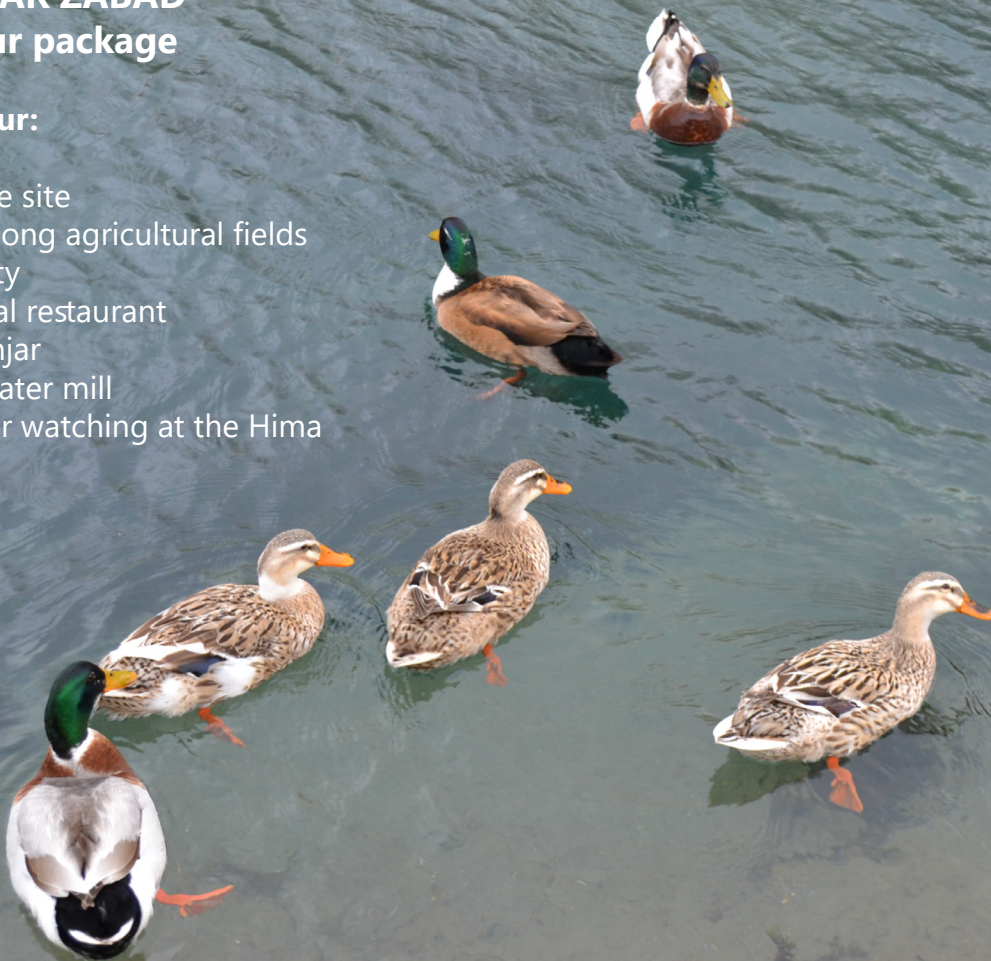
Armenian Catholic church  
Old first settlement houses  
Old press house stone  
Visit Hima Kiosk to support local Handicrafts  
Armenian Orthodox church of St. Paul  
The Armenian genocide memorial  
World Cultural Heritage Site  
Lunch at a restaurant or at a local bakery  
Birds and Otter watching in the Hima  
Visit Nabaa Anjar  
Visit the old water mill



## ANJAR / KFAR ZABAD one day tour package

### Adventure tour:

World Heritage site  
Cycling tour along agricultural fields  
Farming activity  
Lunch at a local restaurant  
Visit Nabaa Anjar  
Visit the old water mill  
Birds and Otter watching at the Hima



## KFAR ZABAD

### one day tour package

Hiking along the marshland of Kfar Zabad  
Bird Watching  
Lunch with local  
Biking in agricultural fields (rent bikes from Anjar)



## **KHERBET KANAFAR / AIN ZEBDE**

### **one day tour package**

Hiking the shepherd trail

Discovering the small street of Kherbet Kanafar

Meeting the Shepherd and learning about herding and goats

Having a traditional breakfast at the Karam family

Wine tasting at Chateau Kanafar

Bird watching

Stunning view on the Bekaa and Qaraoun Lake

Fun Activities in the West Bekaa Country Club

- Archery Activities

- Rope course

- Wall Climbing

## **FEKHA** **one day tour package**

Hiking the Hima trail  
Meeting the shepherd  
Learning about herding goats  
Traditional food in Al Rashid Guesthouse  
Meeting the carpet weavers  
Learning about traditional weaving  
Visiting the Arak distillery house





## **QARAOUN** **one day tour package**

Hike along the lake

Bike in the area around the lake

Take a boat ride

Bird and animal watching

Eat in a restaurant overlooking the lake

Hunt responsibly

Photo by: Asaad Saleh

# Reach Our Local Guides

You can get in touch with our local guides in:

Hima Anjar: Berj Tumberjian 76439344

Hima Kfar Zabad: Sami Abou Rejeile 03846631 and Khalil Shuker 71328851

Hima Kherbet Kanafar: Elie Karam 70108285

Hima Ain Zebde: Tony Hasbani 70848856

Hima Fekha: Tony Nasr 76091532

Local guide's fees: 50,000 LL per day

You can also contact SPNL for further information on:

[www.spnl.org](http://www.spnl.org)

[news@spnl.org](mailto:news@spnl.org)

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