



# Lebanon



## Country Overview:

Location: Middle East, bordering the Mediterranean Sea, between Israel and Syria

Size: 10,400 sq km

Population: 4,131,583 (July 2013 est.)

Capital: Beirut

Exports-commodities: jewelry, base metals, chemicals, miscellaneous consumer goods, fruit and vegetables, tobacco, construction minerals, electric power machinery and switchgear, textile fibers, paper

Imports-commodities: petroleum products, cars, medicinal products, clothing, meat and live animals, consumer goods, paper, textile fabrics, tobacco, electrical machinery and equipment, chemicals

Currency: Lebanese Pound (LBP)

Ethnic groups: Arab 95%, Armenian 4%, other 1%

Religion: Muslim 59.7% (Shia, Sunni, Druze, Isma'elite, Alawite or Nusayri), Christian 39% (Maronite Catholic, Greek Orthodox, Melkite Catholic, Armenian Orthodox, Syrian Catholic)

Government type: republic

Chief of State: President Michel SULAYMAN (since 25 May 2008)

Head of Government: Following the resignation of Prime Minister Najib MIQATI and his Cabinet on 22 March 2013, the government is in caretaker status until a new prime minister is named and a new cabinet is formed.

Language: Arabic (official), French, English, Armenian



## Lebanese Republic/Al Jumhuriyah al Lubnaniyah

### Meetings and Negotiations

- A warm and welcoming smile accompanied by a handshake while saying "Marhaba" (which means "hello") is a greeting that can be given without causing offense.

- **Take time** when greeting a person and be sure to ask about their family, health, etc.

- Like in most of the Middle East, it is advisable to **avoid** offering your left hand when meeting.

- Meetings generally begin with the offer of tea or coffee. While this is being sipped, it is **important** to engage in some chitchat. This helps to establish rapport and **trust**.

- Meetings are not necessarily private. The Lebanese tend to have an open-door policy, which means that people may walk in and out and telephone calls may be answered.

- Present and receive business cards with **two hands** or the right hand.

- Greet elders first.

### Business Attire

- For men: stylish suits are common for initial meetings, usually in darker colors.

- For women: Conservative and stylish. Pants are acceptable.

### Behavior

- Guests are generally served tea or coffee immediately. Good manners dictate that such offers are accepted; **never** reject such an offer as this may be viewed as an insult.

- The Lebanese are very "touchy-feely". **Direct eye** contact with a lot of physical contact is the cornerstones of Lebanese communication.

- Between genders touching can be **inappropriate**. However, this can depend greatly on the subculture. Muslims tend to be more conservative.

- To beckon someone, the Lebanese wave with the palm down, clapping their fingers into the palm in a scratching motion.

- To say **no**, it is common raise the eyebrows and nod the head up slightly or by making a 'tch' sound.

### Gift Giving

- Gifts may be given with the right hand or both hands. It is best **not** to offer a gift with the left hand.

- Gifts may be given to someone who has provided a favor, to someone returning from a trip overseas, or simply out of want, **but they are usually not exchanged at initial business meetings**.

- Gifts of alcohol are welcome in many circles. Muslims though generally do not drink alcohol.

- Gifts should be of modest cost. Anything overly expensive can be viewed as a **bribe** or insult.

### Appropriate Gifts:

- Sweets, pastries and flowers

### Gifts to Avoid:

- Anything very expensive or flashy

## Business Tips continued

### Conversation

- Lebanese have an indirect and non-confrontational communication style, which relates to the need to maintain personal **honor**.

- **Try not** to break the eye contact as this conveys trust, **sincerity** and honesty. However, interestingly the situation is reversed when dealing with elders

where prolonged direct eye contact is considered **rude** and challenging.

- Shaking your head from side to side usually indicates that you don't understand instead of "no".

- People will often speak in loud voices. This generally signifies emotion or excitement.

- As in most middle eastern cultures, **avoid** sitting in a way that

exposes the sole of your foot.

### Topics to Discuss:

- Asking about family and/or health is always greatly appreciated, since it is a large part of the culture.

### Topics to Avoid:

- Israel, Hezbollah, the current political situation, or political and religious figures.