

SYRIA



Country Dialling Code (Tel/Fax): +963

Ministry of Tourism: Barada Street 14, Damascus, Syria Tel: (11) 221 0122 or 224 6096 Fax: (11) 224 2636 E-mail: min-tourism@mail.sy Website: www.syriatourism.org

Capital: Damascus **Time:** GMT + 2

Background: Following the breakup of the Ottoman Empire during World War I, Syria was administered by the French until independence in 1946. In the 1967 Arab-Israeli War, Syria lost the Golan Heights to Israel. Since 1976, Syrian troops have been stationed in Lebanon, ostensibly in a peacekeeping capacity. Talks with Israel over the return of the Golan Heights have recently been revived.

Location: Middle East, bordering the Mediterranean Sea, between Lebanon and Turkey

Map References: Middle East

Area: total: 185,180 sq km, land: 184,050 sq km, water: 1,130 sq km, note: includes 1,295 sq km of Israeli-occupied territory

Climate: mostly desert; hot, dry, sunny summers (June to August) and mild, rainy winters (December to February) along coast; cold weather with snow or sleet periodically hitting Damascus

Terrain: primarily semiarid and desert plateau; narrow coastal plain; mountains in west

Natural Resources: petroleum, phosphates, chrome and manganese ores, asphalt, iron ore, rock salt, marble, gypsum, hydropower

Population: 16,305,659 (July 2000 est.)

Nationality: noun: Syrian(s), adjective: Syrian

Ethnic Groups: Arab 90.3%, Kurds, Armenians, and other 9.7%

Religions: Sunni Muslim 74%, Alawite, Druze, and other Muslim sects 16%, Christian (various sects) 10%, Jewish (tiny communities in Damascus, Al Qamishli, and Aleppo)

Languages: Arabic (official); Kurdish, Armenian, Aramaic, Circassian widely understood; French, English somewhat understood

Economy: Syria's predominantly statist economy is on a shaky footing because of Damascus's failure to implement extensive economic reform. The dominant agricultural sector remains underdeveloped, with roughly 80% of agricultural land still dependent on rain-fed sources. Although Syria has sufficient water supplies in the aggregate at normal levels of precipitation, the great distance between major water supplies and population centers poses serious distribution problems. The water problem is exacerbated by rapid population growth, industrial expansion, and increased water pollution. Private investment is critical to the modernization of the agricultural, energy, and export sectors. Oil production is leveling off, and the efforts of the nonoil sector to penetrate international markets have fallen short. Syria's inadequate infrastructure, outmoded technological base, and weak educational system make it vulnerable to future shocks and hamper competition with neighbors such as Jordan and Israel.

Industries: petroleum, textiles, food processing, beverages, tobacco, phosphate rock mining

Currency: 1 Syrian pound = 100 piastres

Railways: total: 2,750 km, standard gauge: 2,423 km 1.435-m gauge, narrow gauge: 327 km 1.050-m gauge (2000)

Highways: total: 36,377 km, paved: 26,299 km (including 877 km of expressways), unpaved: 10,078 km (1999 est.)

Waterways: 870 km; minimal economic importance

Ports and Harbors: Baniyas, Jablah, Latakia, Tartus

Airports: 104 (1999 est.) Airports - with paved runways: total: 24, over 3,047 m: 5, 2,438 to 3,047 m: 16, 914 to 1,523 m: 1, under 914 m: 2 (1999 est.) Airports - with unpaved runways: total: 80, 1,524 to 2,437 m: 3, 914 to 1,523 m: 14, under 914 m: 63 (1999 est.)

Heliports: 2 (1999 est.)

Visa: required by all.

Duty Free: 200 cigarettes or 50 cigarillos or 25 cigars or 250g of tobacco; 30g perfume for personal use; 570ml of spirits; 500ml of lotion and 500ml eau de cologne; gifts worth up to S£250.

Health: a yellow fever vaccination certificate is required from all travellers arriving from infected areas. Malaria risk exists along the northern border. Mains water is normally chlorinated and relatively safe.

HOTELS•MOTELS•INNS

DAMASCUS

AFAMIA HOTEL, Damascus Syria - P.O.Box: 55 65, Tel: +963 11 222 9152 - 222 8963, Fax: +963 11 222 4683, E mail: info@afamiahotel.com, www.afamiahotel.com

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Al Bilal Hotel, Damascus Port Said Street POBox : 13152, Tel: + 963 11 223 35 19-221 75 67, Fax : + 963 11 223 19 72, E-mail : Bilalhotel@almajed-group.com, <http://www.almajed-group.com>

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RESTAURANTS & BARS

DAMASCUS

AL KHAWALI RESTAURANT, Medhat Basha Street, Old Damascus, Tel. +963 11 2225808

BAR LATERNA, 29th May Street, Salhiah, Tel. +963112323185

BAR MAR MAR, Bab Touma, Old Damascus, Tel. +963 11 232 742

CLAVE DE BAL, Bab Touma, Old Damascus, Tel. +963 11 5445293

HARETNA RESTAURANT, Bab Touma, Beside Ousrat Al Ikhaa al Sourieh, Telephone1: +963 11 544 1184, Telephone2: +963 11 544 1148, Cuisine: Lebanese, <http://www.haretna.net>

AIRLINES/HELICOPTERS/AIRPORTS

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