

Tourist Well-Being, Infection Prevention and Control

Lebanon scale





Analysis of Threats and Enabling Factors for Sustainable Tourism at Pilot Scale

Tourist's wellbeing, infections prevention and control Lebanon scale



Union for the Mediterranean
Union pour la Méditerranée
الاتحاد من أجل المتوسط



CPMR
CRPM



OVERVIEW

The present document was produced in the framework of **Co-Evolve4BG** project “*Co-evolution of coastal human activities & Med natural systems for sustainable tourism & Blue Growth in the Mediterranean*” in relation to Threats and Enabling Factors for maritime and coastal tourism development on a national scale” Co-funded by ENI CBC Med Program (Grant Agreement A_B.4.4_0075).

This document constitutes the **Deliverable 3.1.4.82** (Tourist’s wellbeing, infections prevention and control - Lebanon scale) of the **Activity 3.1.4** (Threats and Enabling Factors at National Scale: Overview) under the **Output 3.1** (Integrated analysis of Threats and Enabling Factors for sustainable tourism at MED scale) of the project.

REVIEW

Contributors

Nahed MSAYLEB, PhD

📍 Lebanese University, Faculty of Agriculture and Veterinary Sciences, Lebanon

Myriam LTEIF, PhD

📍 National Center for Marine Sciences, CNRS, Lebanon

Myriam GHSOUB, PhD

📍 National Center for Marine Sciences, CNRS, Lebanon

Anthony OUBA, PhD

📍 American University of Technology, Lebanon

Reviewers

Talal DARWISH, Pr.

📍 National Center of Remote Sensing, CNRS, Lebanon

Amin SHABAN, Pr.

📍 National Center of Remote Sensing, CNRS, Lebanon

Supervisors

Béchir BEJAOU, PhD

📍 National Institute of Marine Sciences and Technologies, Tunisia

LAYOUT

Khouloud ATHIMEN, Engineer, Technical Coordinator

📍 National Institute of Marine Sciences and Technologies, Tunisia

Houaida BOUALI, Engineer

📍 National Institute of Marine Sciences and Technologies, Tunisia

Mohamed Ali BRIKI, Engineer

📍 Coastal Protection and Planning Agency, Tunisia

Mouna MRAD, PhD

📍 Water Technology and Research Center, Tunisia

Index

Index	iv
List of figures	v
List of abbreviations	vi
I. Introduction	1
II. Materials and methods	2
III. Wellbeing of tourists	3
III.1. Activities beneficial to the wellbeing and health	3
III.2. Risks threatening wellbeing and health	4
IV. Tourism and health safety in Lebanon	5
IV.1. General health guidelines for tourists traveling to Lebanon	5
IV.2. Lebanon and the Covid-19 period	6
IV.3. Tourism safety measures (MoPH and WHO guidelines) focusing on Covid-19	7
V. Lebanese tourism in the context of post-Covid-19	9
VI. References	10

List of figures

Figure 1. The daily report for Covid-19 on June 17, 2021 (Lebanon National Operations Room, 2021)	7
--	---

List of abbreviations

GDP	Gross Domestic Product
MoE	Ministry of Environment
MoPH	Ministry of Public Health
MoT	Ministry of Tourism
NCC	National Committee for Covid-19
NDVP	National Deployment and Vaccination Plan
PINR	Palm Islands Nature Reserve
TCNR	Tyre Coast Nature Reserve
WHO	World Health Organization

I. Introduction

This report represents the threats to co-evolution in touristic areas at a national scale: Tourists' wellbeing and infection prevention and control". The document will provide an overview on the measures taken to mitigate the Covid-19 impact on Lebanese tourism. Tourism requires interaction between people. This deliverable will display safety guidelines taken in Lebanon following the rules of international agencies, such as, the World Health Organization (WHO) and national authorities, such as the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH).

It will identify and elaborate health and safety guidelines from MoPH and WHO for tourists to prevent and control infections during their stay in Lebanon. It will also elaborate the procedures required by the MoPH regarding infections and Covid-19 tests and quarantine for tourists' visit and stay in Lebanon. In addition, safety measures followed by restaurants and resorts will also be displayed.

Lebanon is a small country that hosts 6.8 million inhabitants, of which around one-third are refugees (Palestinians and Syrians) and migrant workers. The country is witnessing an unprecedented financial and sociopolitical crisis, the aftermath of the Beirut Port explosion, in addition to the Covid-19 pandemic that afflicted Lebanon in February 2020. This has added to the fragility of the healthcare system (NDVP *et al.*, 2021).

Since October 2019, the tourism sector in Lebanon has started to deteriorate rapidly due to many events, starting with the October 17th protests, Covid-19 outbreak and Beirut Port explosion on August 4, 2020. All these events have adversely impacted the general population's wellbeing, healthcare facilities and tourism flux (NDVP *et al.*, 2021).

The adverse events that have occurred in Lebanon have had a direct effect on tourists' wellbeing. The notion of "tourists' wellbeing" is related to their happiness and comfort related to holiday making, subjective wellbeing, destination marketing and essentially their health.

In response to the Covid-19 outbreak, the Lebanese government initiated a "whole government response" through a public-private partnership, with the National Committee for Covid-19 (NCC) to direct the strategy and the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH)—alongside other ministries— to ensure national protection measures and wellbeing of locals and tourists, in order to prevent the spread of the virus which had a negative impact on tourism. Hence, since tourism is related to the economy, the government has revised several measures to respond to the decreased tourist flux due to the pandemic, and to contribute to enhancing the economy.

Finally, the Lebanese government has also developed a National Deployment and Vaccination Plan (NDVP), in collaboration with all partners to ensure that the plan and related financing for the deployment, implementation and monitoring of the Covid-19 vaccination are well defined to achieve timely and successful introduction of Covid-19 vaccines. This action aims to ensure population immunization (*i.e.*, herd immunity) and create a safe and reassuring environment for tourism.

II. Materials and methods

The information and data for this report that cover the wellbeing of tourists and infection prevention and control in Lebanon, is based on published reports and articles that include the safety guidelines, particularly for Covid-19, or available data and statistics from the relevant ministries.

Health and safety guidelines from MoPH and WHO for tourists to prevent and control infections, as well as the procedures regarding infections and Covid-19 tests and quarantine for tourists' stay in Lebanon, will be elaborated. In addition, safety measures followed by restaurants and resorts will also be displayed.

III. Wellbeing of tourists

III.1. Activities beneficial to the wellbeing and health

Tourists' wellbeing and health is indispensable to be ensured since it constitutes the main concern of tourists. Tourists' wellbeing can be used as a marketing tool to influence consumers' choice of holiday destination. Positive touristic wellbeing has a potential to enhance the economy, contributing to the development of the country of destination (positively affecting employment opportunities, GDP, and local businesses) (Pyke *et al.*, 2016).

Some activities that can be beneficial to the wellbeing of tourists in Lebanon:

- **Hiking Protected Areas' trails:** Lebanon is characterized by many protected areas declared by the Ministry of Environment (MoE). Some of these areas are inland such as the Ehden Reserve, the Cedars of God, and the Barouk Reserve. Others are coastal, like Tyre Coast Nature Reserve (TCNR) and Palm Islands Nature Reserve (PINR). Tourists can visit these areas and spend a full day at each, enjoying the beauty of nature.
- **Spas and beach resorts:** Lebanon offers local summer getaways that could compete with any vacation destination. There are many beautiful beach resorts in Lebanon with easy access, sandy beaches, pools, restaurants, and bars. In addition, tourists can benefit from physical relaxation techniques offered by many spas in the country.
- **Spiritual retreats:** Adventures in Lebanon will also take tourists on retreats to visit a selection of important sacred sites and cultural wine tasting events, all of which can positively contribute to their mental and physical wellbeing.
- **Medical tourism:** With costs significantly lower than in most developed countries, and plenty of highly skilled surgeons and physicians, healthcare in Lebanon is an attractive prospect.
- **Outdoor activities:** The Lebanese landscape is ideal for outdoor activities. The beautiful mountains and valleys host some attractive hiking trails and offer amazing views for paragliding. The Lebanese coastline also attracts all kinds of water sports, and the country's rivers and caves are perfectly suitable for rafting and caving. During wintertime, when Lebanon's mountains are covered by snow, skiing and snowboarding become the number one activity. Therefore, tourists can benefit from all these outdoor activities to experience happiness, as well as physical and mental wellbeing.

III.2. Risks threatening wellbeing and health

Several risks and crises represent significant threats to the tourism industry. Moreover, several activities performed by tourists during crises can affect tourist happiness and wellbeing. Some destinations may be more susceptible to particular crises than other ones.

Examples of touristic activities during crises include (CBI, 2021):

- **Natural disasters:** tourists that travel to countries with natural disaster risks (earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, tsunamis and floods, hurricanes and other extreme weather disasters), risk their wellbeing. Lebanon is characterized by an acceptable climate where natural disasters cause low- to no-damage and provides easy-access to all Lebanese regions and localities. However, natural disasters are unpredictable in all regions. So, tourists need to be cautious.
- **Political issues** – Political instability is a significant threat to tourism as it affects the entire socioeconomic situation. Lebanon is an unstable country. Therefore, any touristic activity performed during peaks of political protests or events can have an adverse effect on tourists' wellbeing and happiness. For example, road blockages during political protests can hinder the mobility of tourists in Lebanon.
- **Terrorism** – Some countries/regions suffer more from terrorist attacks than others. Lebanon has witnessed many terrorism events that impacted all the vital sectors, with a special emphasis to tourism. Due to its political instability, Lebanon is more prone to terrorism events. Therefore, any touristic activity performed during peaks of instability will affect tourists' wellbeing and happiness.
- **Health-related incidents** – The tourism sector in Lebanon was heavily affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. The number of tourists reached its lowest records by the middle of 2020. The positive Covid-19 cases, registered in Lebanon in 2020 could have also posed threats on visiting tourists' health. Therefore, any touristic activity performed in crowded areas can increase the tourists' exposure to Covid-19. Recent decrease in registered daily cases (between 10 and 150 declared positive and less than 5 deaths), caused by the advance of vaccination, indicates the Pandemic situation is under control in Lebanon and the summer season of 2021 has registered high reservation of touristic resorts, hotels, and restaurants.

IV. Tourism and health safety in Lebanon

IV.1. General health guidelines for tourists traveling to Lebanon

Tourists going anywhere need to take precautions and perform actions to stay healthy and safe on their trip. Likewise, vaccines cannot protect tourists from all diseases, so their behavior is important. Some guidelines set by the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for travelers coming to Lebanon are listed below (CDC, 2021):

Tourists must make sure they are updated on all routine vaccines before every trip. Some of these vaccines include Chickenpox (Varicella), Diphtheria-Tetanus-Pertussis Flu (influenza), Measles-Mumps-Rubella (MMR) and Polio.

All tourists above 16 years of age should get fully vaccinated for Covid-19 before travel.

It is recommended that tourists of age 1 year and older get the Hepatitis A vaccine before coming to Lebanon.

Unvaccinated tourists of all ages are advised to take the Hepatitis B vaccine before coming to Lebanon.

Tourist infants 6 to 11 months old traveling internationally should get 1 dose of measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) vaccine before travel.

Rabid dogs are commonly found in Lebanon. If you are bitten or scratched by a dog or other mammal while in Lebanon, it is recommended to consult the physician. Tourists, especially children, should consider rabies vaccination before their trip to Lebanon if they are planning to camp or explore caves, visit rural areas and be around dogs or wildlife.

The typhoid vaccine is also recommended for most travelers, especially those staying with friends or relatives or visiting smaller cities or rural areas.

Tourists are also advised to avoid drinking contaminated water and swallow contaminated soil, as well as eat raw or contaminated food to avoid leptospirosis.

Tourists are advised to avoid bug bites, especially the sand fly bite that causes Leishmaniasis.

Tourists are advised to avoid sick people, especially those infected with airborne diseases, such as Middle East Respiratory virus syndrome (MERS) and Tuberculosis (TB).

IV.2. Lebanon and the Covid-19 period

After the confirmation of the first case of Covid-19 in February 2020, the Lebanese government initiated a “whole government response”, with the NCC directing the strategy and the MoPH alongside other ministries overseeing the implementation (Khoury *et al.*, 2020).

The government shut down public transport and banned flights to countries that had experienced exponential growth patterns of Covid-19. Day care centers, schools, universities, nightclubs, pubs, gyms, theaters, malls, restaurants, touristic sites, and public gardens were all closed ⁵. Then, the government declared “public mobilization,” issued stay-at-home orders, and closed the borders, with full lockdown of nonessential services.

The government implemented a long lockdown in February 2020. Then, July 2020 witnessed a decrease in the number of cases and allowed the gradual opening of the country. However, after the Beirut Port explosion, the Covid-19 cases took pace and spread widely, reaching over 3,000 cases per day in January 2021, when a second total lockdown was enforced.

The tourism sector in Lebanon was heavily affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, the economic crisis, and the Beirut Port blast, with the lowest monthly tourist flux recorded in March 2020, during the peak outbreak of the global pandemic and closure of the airport. The entire economy sector, from the informal workers to the luxury retail and hotels, were the main victims of the containment efforts and the measures taken to prevent and control the Covid-19 epidemic in Lebanon (UNICEF, 2021).

Considering the global requirement for vaccination and the urge to restore the touristic and economic sectors, the government of Lebanon, with the support of the World Bank and other partners, has conducted the Covid-19 vaccine readiness assessment, established a National Covid-19 Vaccine Committee, and prepared a National Covid-19 Deployment and Vaccination Plan (NDVP).

The NDVP constitutes the cornerstone of Lebanon vaccination readiness. According to the NDVP, the aim of the Lebanese government is to vaccinate 80% of the total population (citizens and non-citizens residing in the country). Vaccinations were planned to target high-risk populations first, through several phases in-line with the WHO recommendations: high-risk health workers, population above 65 years of age, epidemiological and surveillance staff, and population between 55-64 years with comorbidities. By prioritizing these groups, the country's vaccination program has succeeded in reducing the consequences of the pandemic (Worldbank, 2021).

With the help of the World Bank, a reallocation of USD 34 million from an existing health project in Lebanon, the vaccination program was launched. Lebanon has started Covid-19 vaccination campaign on February 14, 2021. Medical staff, people older than 75, chronic disease patients were prioritized for vaccination. The Lebanese MoPH is

providing through the COVAX platform the Pfizer- BioNTech and Astrazeneca-Oxford vaccines that are WHO-endorsed. Other vaccines, such as Russian Gamaleya Sputnik 5 and Sinopharm Chinese vaccine, are available through the private sector.

As of June 17, 2021, a total of 718,163 inhabitants (15.1% of population) in Lebanon had received at least 1 dose of the vaccine, and 375,380 inhabitants (7.1% of population) had been fully vaccinated (Figure 1; Lebanon National Operations Room, 2021).

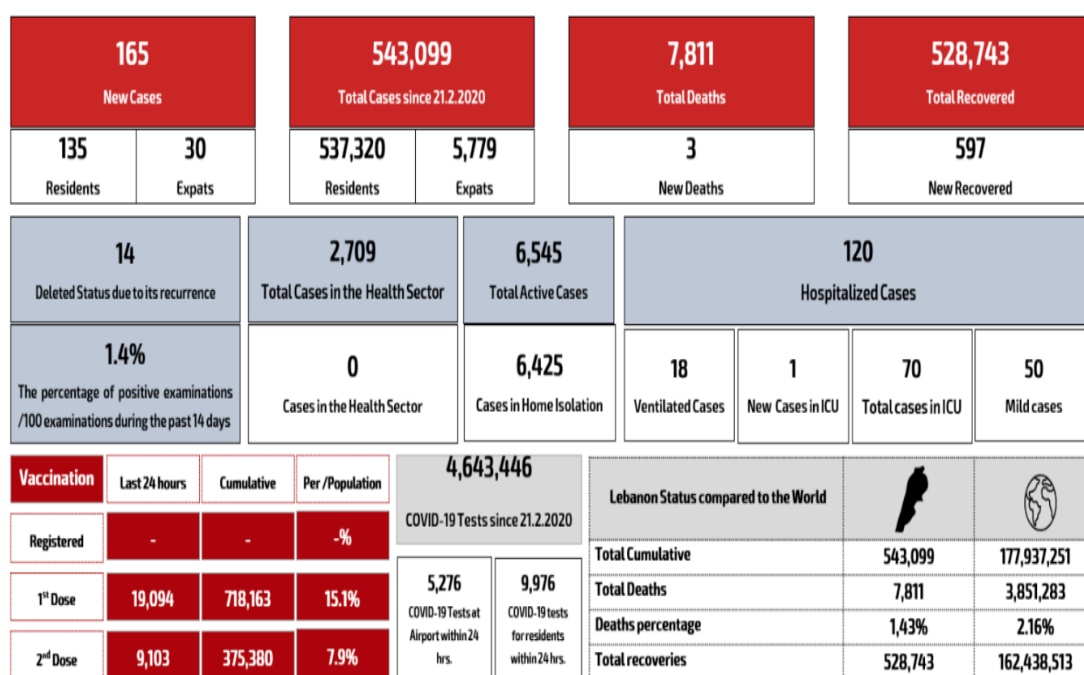


Figure 1. The daily report for Covid-19 on June 17, 2021
 (Lebanon National Operations Room, 2021).

IV.3. Tourism safety measures (MoPH and WHO guidelines) focusing on Covid-19

The Lebanese government has implemented special entry and exit restrictions and requirements for its territories due to Covid-19. Tourists should verify if the local authorities of their current location, transit points and destinations have implemented any restrictions or requirements related to pandemic situations.

The Lebanese authorities announced the closure of Beirut International Airport (BEY) as well as land and sea borders on March 19, 2020, due to the Covid-19 pandemic. It re-opened on July 1, 2020, with direct and indirect commercial flights operating daily. Travelers were advised by the corresponding embassies and MoPH to make all

necessary preparations prior to traveling to Lebanon. These measures are frequently changing, so updated details should be checked regularly.

Once the borders were reopened, local authorities in Lebanon adopted several sanitary protocols to ensure protection and safety of tourists and the local community.

- Travelers are advised to abide by the following measures to reduce the general risk of transmission:
Frequently clean hands by using alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water for at least 30 seconds.
- When coughing and sneezing, cover the mouth and nose with a flexed elbow or tissue which should be disposed of appropriately and immediately, and wash hands.
- In case of a fever, cough, difficulty breathing, or any other symptoms suggestive of respiratory illness, including pneumonia, call emergency services before going to the doctor and/or take Covid-19 test.

In addition, as of June 15, 2021, Entry and Exit Requirements Travelers (U.S. Embassy in Lebanon, 2021) who have been outside Lebanon for more than one week (or who are arriving for the first time) must show a negative PCR test taken within 96 hours of travel to be allowed to enter the country.

- All travelers are required to present upon arrival a negative PCR test from within 96 hours of arrival, submit to an additional PCR test at the airport and 72-hour quarantine, and advised to download the “covidletrack” app, unless exempted. Exceptions include travelers under the age of 12 and those who have documented proof of testing positive for Covid-19 more than 15 days prior to arrival, an IgG positive test showing sufficient antibodies, or proof of full vaccination more than 15 days prior to arrival.
- Covid tests will be given to all arriving travelers at a cost of USD 50 per test, to be paid by the traveler and collected by the airline, unless the traveler qualifies for an exemption as listed above.
- Quarantine is mandatory for travelers coming from Brazil and the United Kingdom. Travelers from the U.K with a one dose vaccine are exempted from the quarantine (Republic of Lebanon, 2021).
- Rafic Hariri International Airport is operating at 20 percent capacity.
- Public transportation is operating at a limited capacity. Masks are always required outdoors and in public spaces.

V. Lebanese tourism in the context of post-Covid-19

The tourism sector represents 20% of national income. Nevertheless, the Covid-19 crisis had caused 50% of tourism establishments to close or suffer severely. Rebuilding tourism is a priority, and this sector must become more sustainable and resilient in the future. Many governments have taken impressive immediate action to restore and re-activate the tourism sector, while protecting jobs and businesses. It is very important to prepare plans to support the sustainable recovery of tourism, move to a greener tourism system, and rethink tourism for the future (OECD, 2020).

Aiming to ensure the revitalization of the sector in Lebanon, innovative policies and plans were recently issued following the impact of tourists' flow reduction. For this purpose, the Ministry of Tourism (MoT) and the MoPH have created several platforms (websites, social media channels, etc.) that include instructions and actualities for better guidance.

New measures were taken to mitigate structural tourism problems and surpass the crisis. For example, stimulus packages provided support in the form of liquidity and relief (e.g., tax and VAT postponements, loans, advisory services complying with the new rules) to self-employees, small businesses, health care sector and all tourism businesses, promoting domestic tourism, providing less crowded destinations, enhancing new businesses, introducing and promoting digitalization and connectivity as an important key, respecting social distancing and incentivizing less crowded destinations.

Since Lebanon's vaccination rollout is 15.1% through the MoPH program, besides the programs being carried out by the private sector at its own expense to vaccinate workers. The leader of the Covid-19 National Vaccine Coordinating Committee, Dr. Abed El Rahman Bizri, stated that 25% of the population are immunized, and considered this percentage to be impressive regarding the inoculation rate.

The general secretary of Tourism and Trade Unions Federation, Jean Beiruti, also stated that Lebanon had succeeded in gradually reducing the number of Covid-19 infections, which would encourage tourism establishments to resume their work and then businesses can stay afloat.

VI. References

CBI, 2021. How to manage risks in tourism? [WWW Document]. cbi.eu. URL <https://www.cbi.eu/market-information/tourism/how-manage-risks-tourism> (accessed 6.18.21).

CDC, 2021. Travelers Health-Lebanon [WWW Document]. URL <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/lebanon> (accessed 6.27.21).

Khoury, P., Azar, E., Hitti, E., 2020. Covid-19 Response in Lebanon Current Experience and Challenges in a Low-Resource Setting, JAMA. <https://doi.org/10.1056/nejmp2006141>

Lebanon National Operations Room, 2021. Daily Report on Covid-19-June 17, 2021.

NDVP, C.-19 V.N.C.C., Worldbank, WHO, UNICEF, UNHCR, UNRWA, 2021. Lebanon National Deployment and Vaccination Plan for Covid-19 Vaccines, Republic of Lebanon Ministry of Public Health.

OECD, 2020. Tourism Policy Responses to the coronavirus (Covid-19), Oecd.

Pyke S., Hartwell H., Blake A., Hemingway A., 2016. Exploring well-being as a tourism product resource. Tour. Manag. 55, 94–105. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2016.02.004>

Republic Of Lebanon, 2021. PCM1030.

U.S. Embassy in Lebanon, 2021. Covid-19 Information [WWW Document]. URL <https://lb.usembassy.gov/covid-19-information/> (accessed 6.18.21).

UNICEF, 2021. Covid-19 an unprecedented global crisis with widespread implications [WWW Document]. URL <https://www.unicef.org/lebanon/media/5616/file> (accessed 8.16.21).

Worldbank, 2021. World Bank and IFRC Support Independent Monitoring of Covid-19 Vaccine Campaign in Lebanon [WWW Document]. URL <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2021/02/12/world-bank-and-ifrc-support-independent-monitoring-of-covid-19-vaccine-campaign-in-lebanon>

DISCLAIMER

The present document has been produced with the financial assistance of the European Union under the ENI CBC Med Program. The contents of this document are the sole responsibility of the *Ministry of Public Works and Transport, Al Midan NGO* and *AMWAJ of the Environment*. In addition, under no circumstances it could be regarded as reflecting the European Union position of the program management structures.

PARTNERS



Institut National Des Sciences
Et Technologies De La Mer



ASSOCIATES PARTNERS



CPMR
CRPM



المدرسة الوطنية للمهندسين بتونس
école nationale d'ingénieurs de Tunis

