

The Cedars of God – A legendary forest

Geography

- * It is located at the foot of Mount al-Makmal in northern Lebanon, overlooking the Kadisha Valley.
- * It extends to an area of 102,346 square meters of hills and slopes.
- * It is located at an altitude of 1883 meters above sea level; starting at the lowest point in the forest passing by the Church of the Transfiguration (Kanizat Al Tajalli- كنيسة التجلي) at an altitude of 1934 meters and arriving to the hill where the Cedar Holy Trinity in the far south stands at an altitude of 1938 meters.
- * It is surrounded by a semi-circular fence, which length is of 1339 meters while its height is of 3 meters. This fence was built by the administrative authority of the Ottoman (Al-Mutessarif – المتصرف) Rustem Pasha in 1876 and was funded by Great Britain's Queen Victoria.
- * It is covered with snow from mid-December until mid-April.
- * Its ground is an accumulation of calcareous soil.
- * Some of the trees found within the forest: Juniper- Juniperus Excelsa- Maple – Cedar Oak- Rowan.
- * It is inhabited by various types of birds and mammals as well as butterflies and reptiles.

Formation

- The Cedar tree roots extend horizontally and vertically in the ground, allowing its stability and securing its moisture.
- It is thick and sturdy when originating from the trunk.
- Its trunk rises vertically to reach sixty meters. The oldest diameter of a trunk ranges between 12 and the 18 meters.
- Its branches gradually branch off from the trunk and unfold horizontally in all directions. The length of most of these branches can reach more than 45 meters.
- The male cedar seeds blossom, announcing the arrival of spring season at the beginning of April. The fruiting cones take two years to mature, and on average, trees do not bear cones until they are 40 years old or more.

The myrrh found in the branches and cones of the Cedar trees give them the scented smell of incense. In the ancient days, the myrrh used to be dried and milled in order to be used in healing wounds, burns and leprosy.

As for the Cedar tree oil, it was used to protect against mold and corrosion.

Number of Cedar Trees in the Legendary Forest

It is estimated that the number of cedar trees in the Cedar forest is as follows:

- ❖ 6 Cedars of nearly 2,500 years old each.

- ❖ 7 Cedars of over 1,500 years each.
- ❖ 400 Cedars ranging between 500 and 1,000 years.
- ❖ 4 Cedars affected by diseases and pests.
- ❖ 3 very old Cedar trunks that are still standing without branches.
- ❖ 4 middle-aged and medium-sized Cedars uprooted by storms and lightning.

In addition to 1225 Cedar trees ranging between 5 and 15 meters in height and about 1000 others of less than 5 meters of height.

The most prominent Cedar trees in the Legendary Forest

Among the most prominent cedar trees, there are:

- The Adam and Eve cedar tree which was called the Family Cedar, and is now known as The Lovers or the Love cedar as its branches are entwined.
- The flag Cedar, which is the Cedar figuring in the middle of the Lebanese flag as it stands for resistance and greenery.
- The guard's Cedar named after the guard of the region who was building a tree house for himself there in order to be able to keep any aggressor from harming the Cedar trees and damaging the cultivated fields.
- Lamartine Cedar named after Alphonse de Lamartine who visited the Cedars on 10 July 1832. In 1925, the youth of Bsharre placed a commemorative plaque on the trunk of that tree.
- The Cedar of God is the oldest cedar and is about 2,500 years old. It is characterized by having the thickest trunk (18 circular meters) and by being the largest of them all; this is why it was called The Cedar of God.
- Saint Theresa's Cedar was named on the occasion of the visit of her relics to the cedar forest in September 2001.

It is to be taken into consideration that the Lebanese Cedar was adopted as an icon to be placed on the 100,000 LBP bill and on the Lebanese passport.

How to access the legendary forest

There many paths leading to the Cedars of God as follows;

- Beirut- Aley- Zahle- Baalbek- Deir Al Ahmar- Aynata -Dahr Al Qadib- Jouret Al Turkman- The Cedars.
- Beirut- Kfar Hazir- Amioun- Kousba- Abdin- Hadath Al Jebbe- Hasroun- Bsharre- The Cedars.

- Beirut- Shekka- Kfar Hazir- Kousba- Tourza- Arabet Kozhaya- Ehden- Kfar Sghab- Hadshit- Bsharre- The Cedars.
- Beirut-Tripoli- Al Qobbeh- Zgharta- Aito- Ajba'a- Ehden- Kfar Sghab- Hadshit- Bsharre- The Cedars .