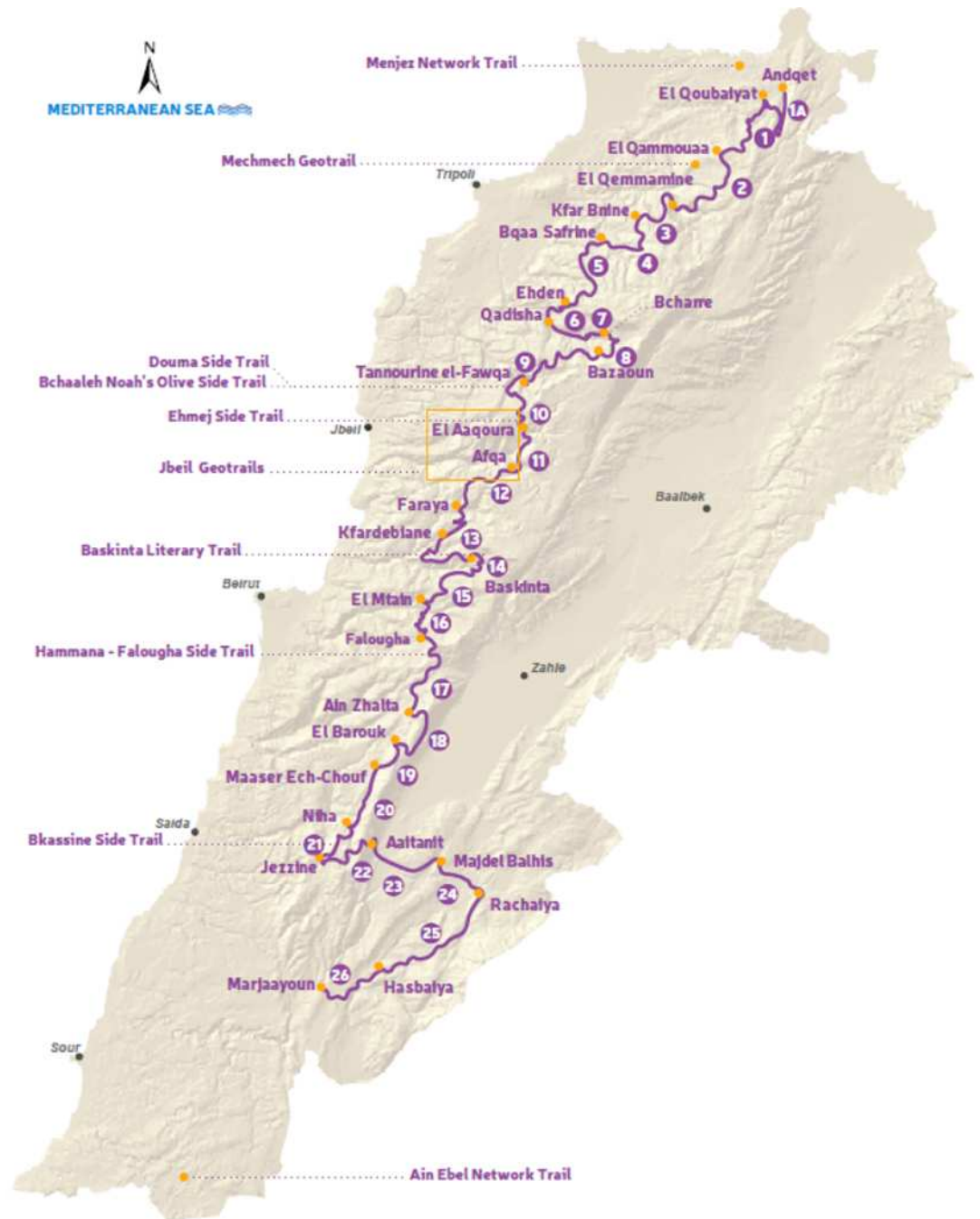


The Lebanon Mountain Trail

The trail consists of about 600 km. of both ancient pathways and recently developed hiking trails. It runs through the central mountains and valleys of Lebanon from close to its northern border with Syria and to within sight of the northern border of Palestine-Israel.





The trail passes through about 75 towns and villages, 1 World Heritage Site, 2 biosphere reserves, 4 nature reserves, 5 protected areas, and 6 important bird migration routes and areas. The highest point on the trail is 2073 m.



The Awali Valley, about a 90-minute drive south of Beirut. It borders the Al-Shouf Cedar Nature Reserve, the southernmost habitat of the Lebanese cedar.



Another view of the Awali Valley; in the centre-right of the picture towards the bottom of the valley is the guesthouse in which we stayed for about five days in April 2023.



The guesthouse below the village of Batloun.



The trail in southern Lebanon.



Looking down into the Beqaa Valley in southern Lebanon. You can faintly see in the distance the snow-capped Mount Hermon, one of the highest mountains in the Middle East, and the subject of a few verses in the Bible.



An older cedar tree in the Shouf reserve. When a cedar reaches maturity its branches spread out, whereas younger trees (background left) have the more conical shape that we associate with spruce trees in Canada.

Some of the oldest trees in the Shouf reserve. Note that the more twisted the tree, the less desirable it is for lumber, and thus it lives a very long life.





In the Shouf reserve, an ancient cedar, apparently the model for the cedar on the Lebanese flag.



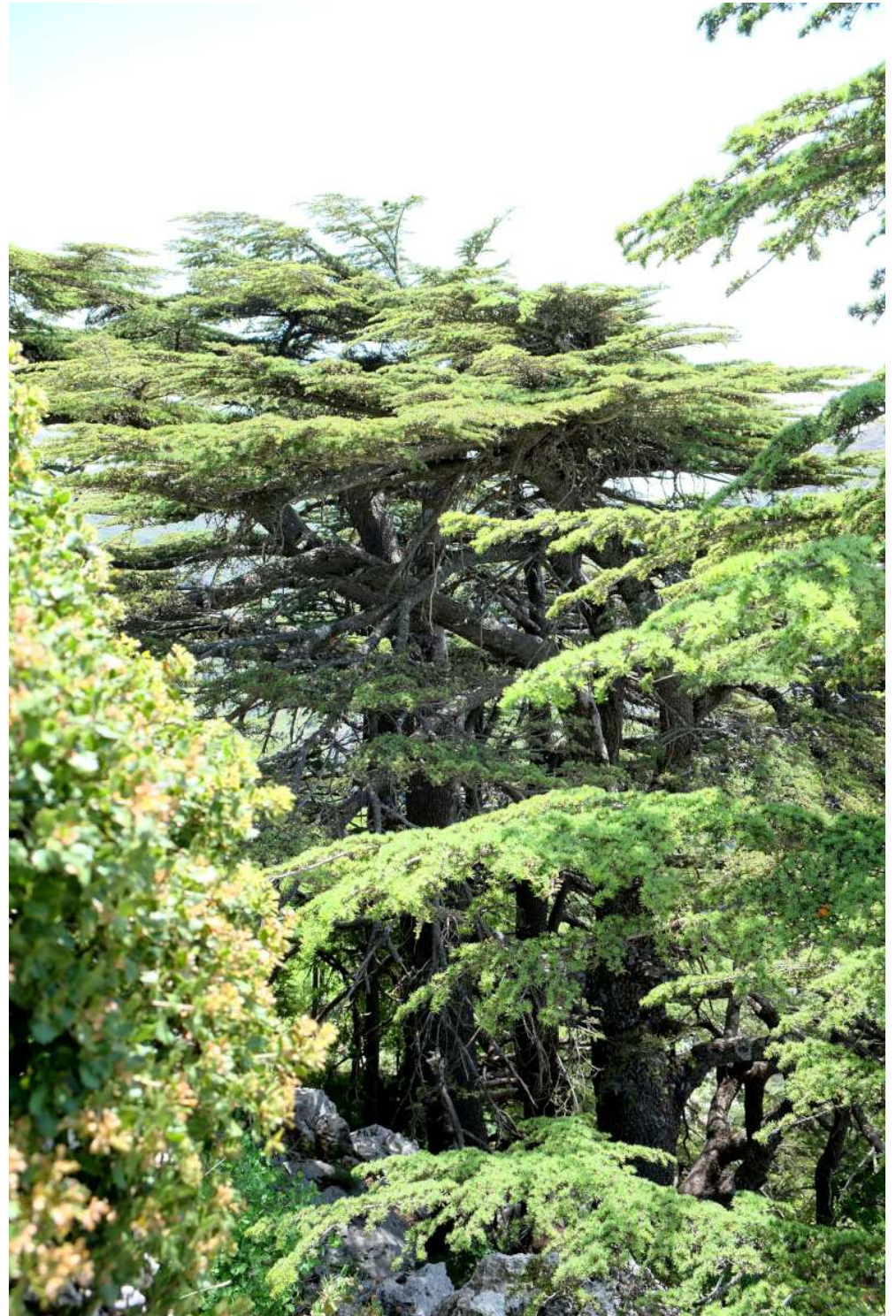


The town of Barouk seen from the Shouf reserve.



Looking down from the heights of the Tannourine Cedar Reserve in central Lebanon.

Mature cedars in the
Tannourine reserve.





The central area of a guesthouse in Hadath el Jeddeh.

A newly built guesthouse in Barouk, where we stayed for a few days in 2019.





The Qadisha Valley



The Qadisha Valley seen from outside the Sequoia guesthouse.



The main room and kitchen of the Sequoia guesthouse in Becharri.



Outside the Sequoia guesthouse, looking down the path to the edge of the valley.

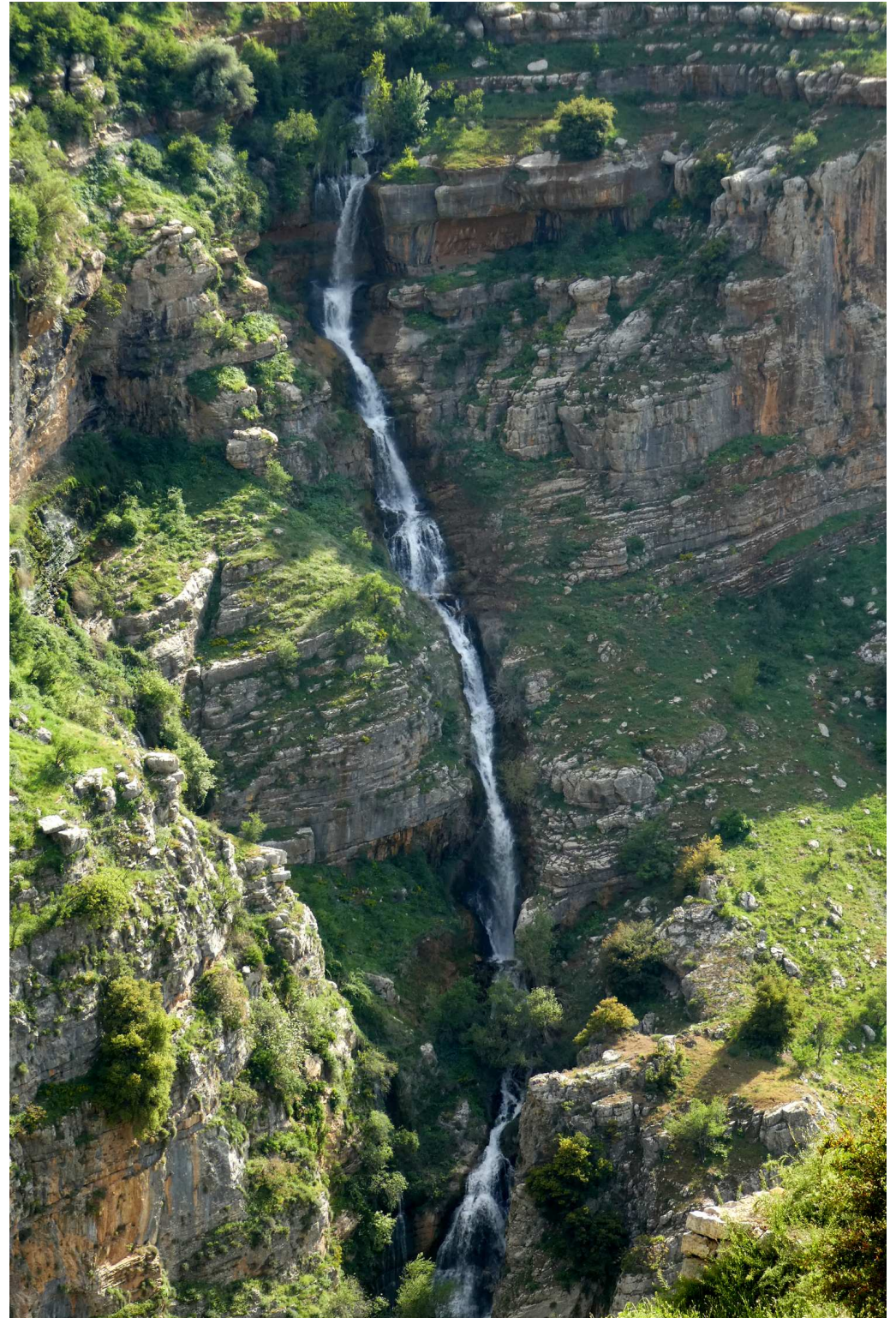


The Sequoia guesthouse (slightly to the left of centre)
at the head of the valley.



Two views of the Qadisha Valley from the Lebanon Mountain Trail.

One of many waterfalls along
the valley.



Archaeology & Architecture

An entranceway at
the Baalbek temples.



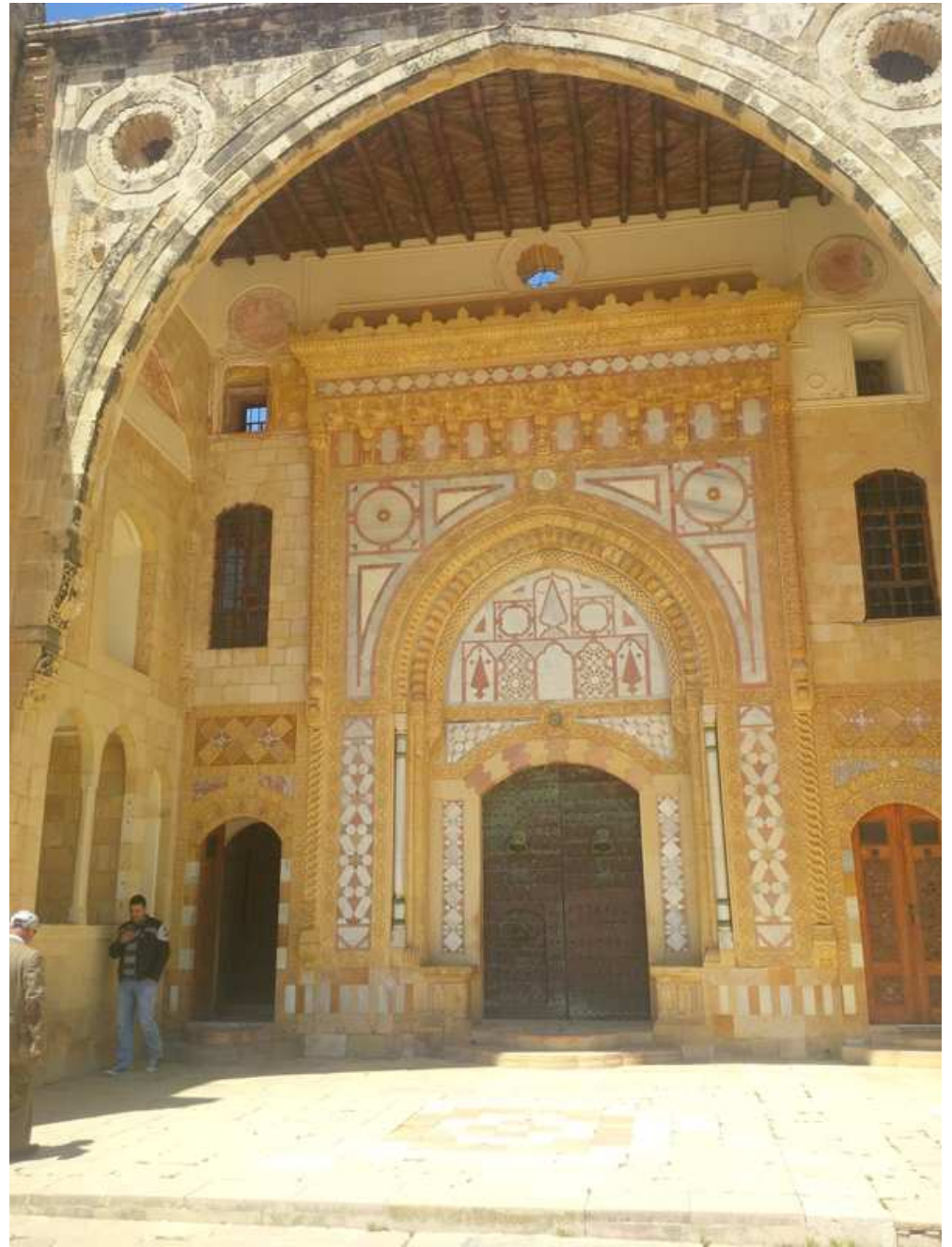


Jbeil (Byblos) has ruins probably dating to earlier than 8000 BCE, as well as structures from various eras ever since. Most of the ruins have been excavated only in the last 50 years. It is one of the major tourist destinations in the Middle East.



A modern pathway down to the sea created from a Roman road in Jbeil.

Beiteddine Palace, Ottoman era, late 18th century. Heavily damaged during the civil war, now restored.





The town of Beiteddine, typically built into a hillside; this shows newer construction with poured cement and older buildings with limestone blocks.



Anjar in the southern Beqaa; built in the early 8th century CE as a trading depot on major crossroads running north to Baalbek, south to Palestine, east to Damascus and the silk roads, west to Beirut



Arches in Anjar



More views of Anjar



Part of the governor's residence at Anjar



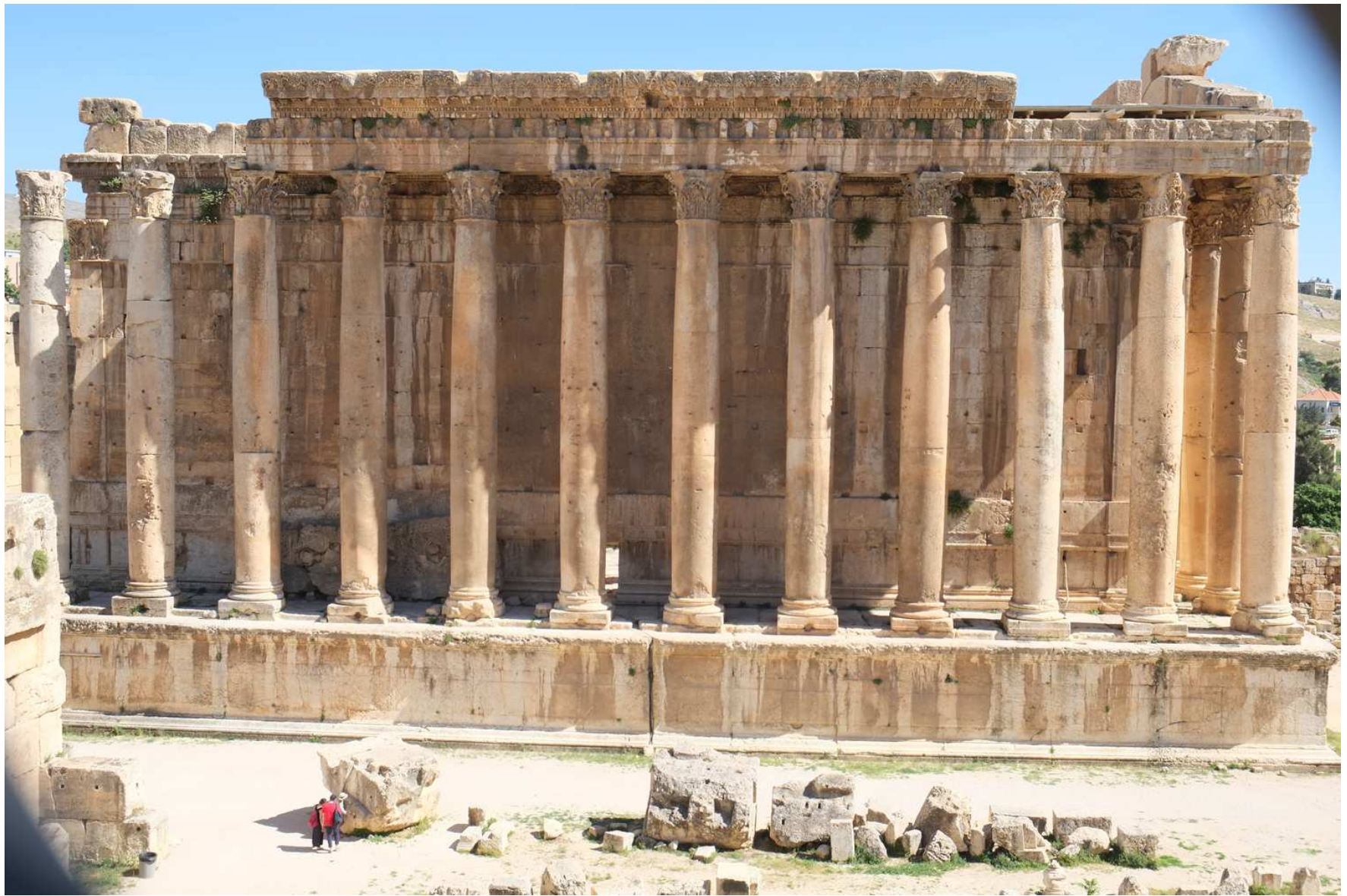
According to local guides, the city of Baalbek in the northern Beqaa contains the ruins of the largest Roman-era temple complex outside of Italy. This image shows a foundation stone meant for an expansion of the temple around the time the Romans abandoned the area. It's estimated to weigh about 1000 tonnes.



Another view of the quarry stone, known as the Stone of the Pregnant Woman; in the centre distance you can see the site of the temples, marked by the six columns of the Temple of Jupiter.

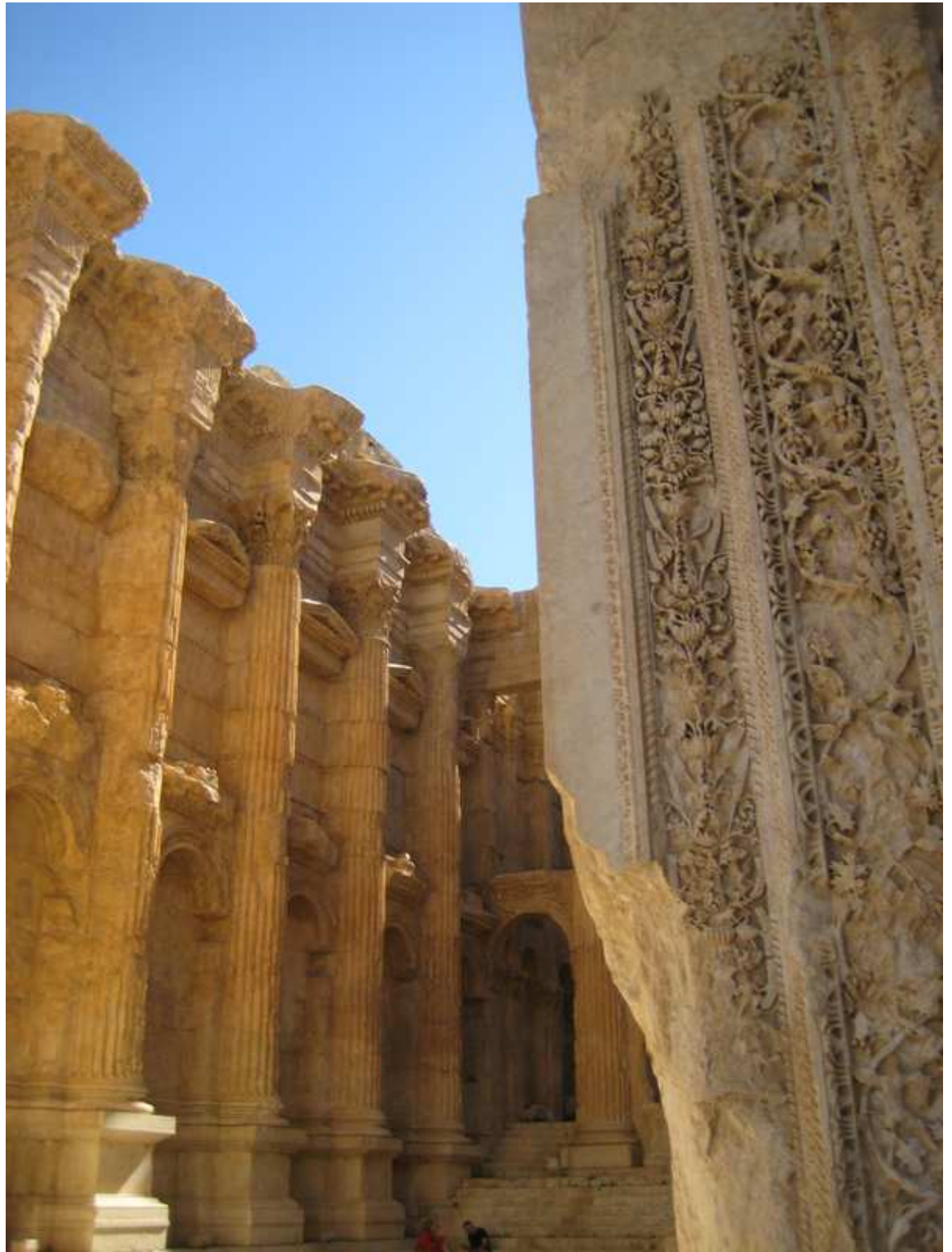


The main entrance to the Temple of Jupiter at Baalbek.



A view of one end of the Temple of Bacchus, the least damaged building in the complex.

Part of the interior of the
Temple of Bacchus.

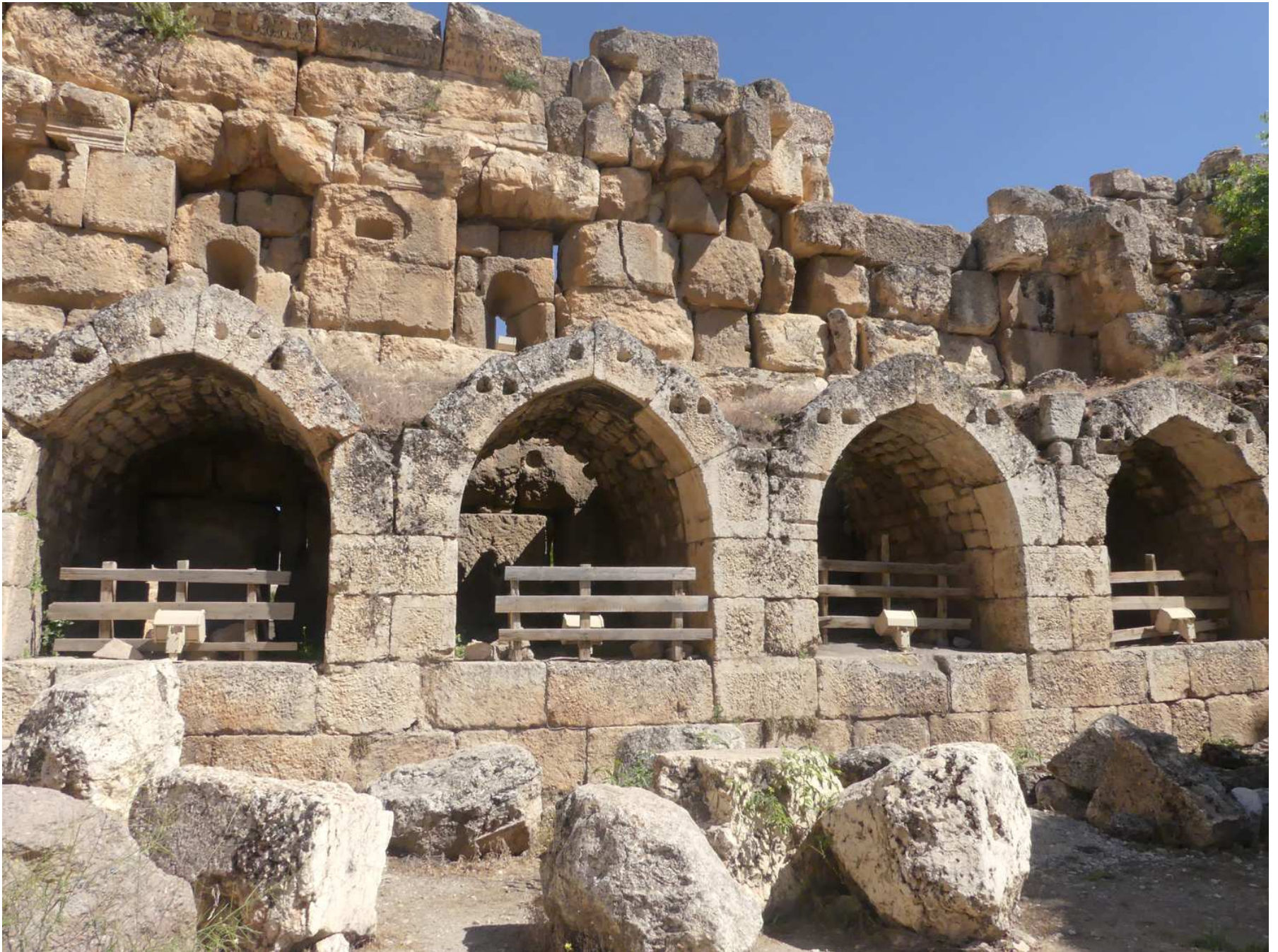




Looking up at the ceiling of the outer structure.



Restoration of some of the columns of the Temple of Jupiter.



Along one wall of the interior Great Court.



A wider view of the Great Court.



Another view of the Great Court.



Structures along the eastern wall of the Great Court.



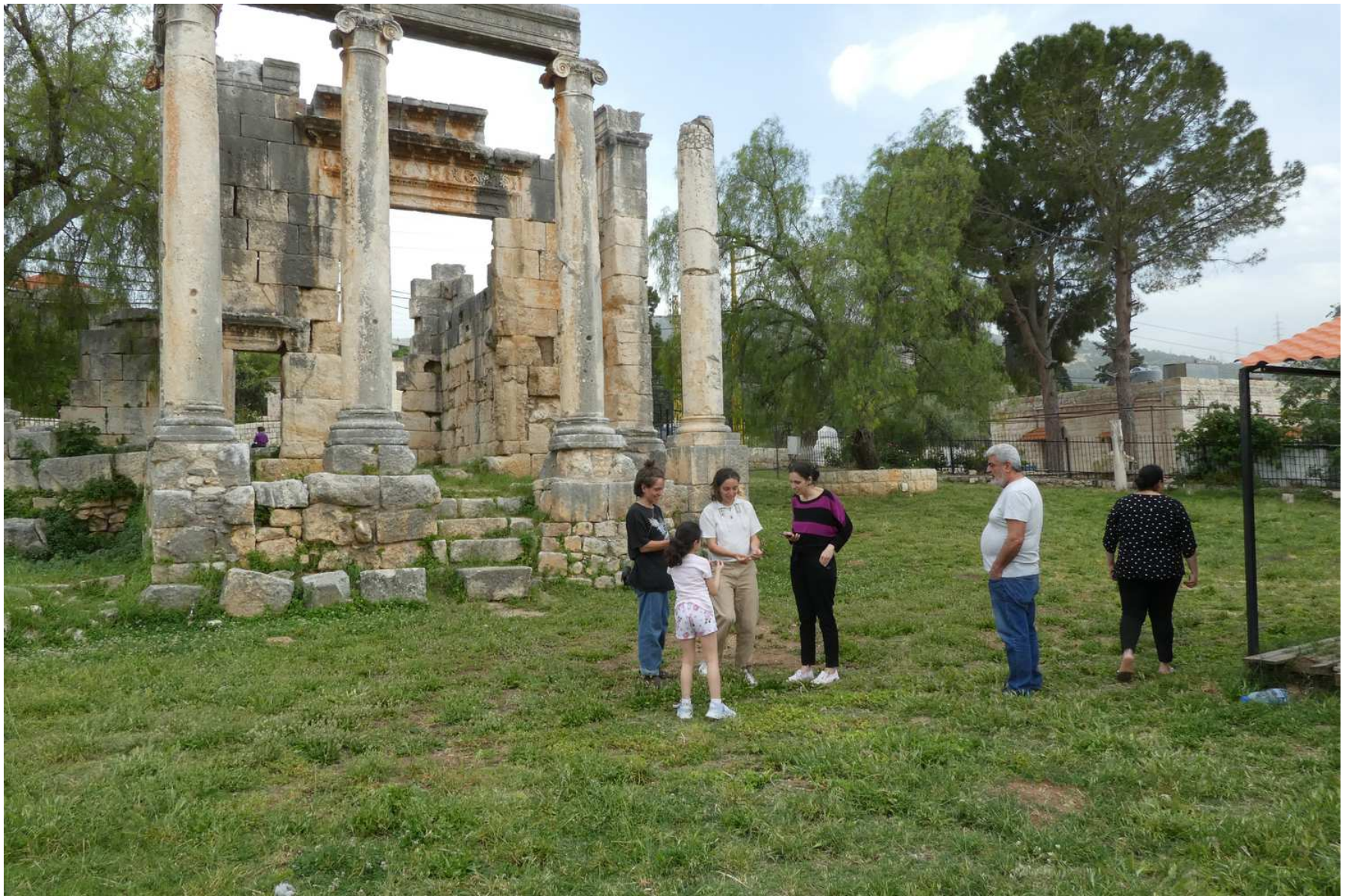
The Temple of Venus.



Excavations of Roman-era Beirut.



Another view of the Roman site in Beirut.



The Roman temple in Bziza, the village of my grandparents. The temple was built around the 1st century CE on top of a much older Phoenician temple.



The late-19th century house where my grandmother lived.



The recently renovated interior of my grandmother's house.



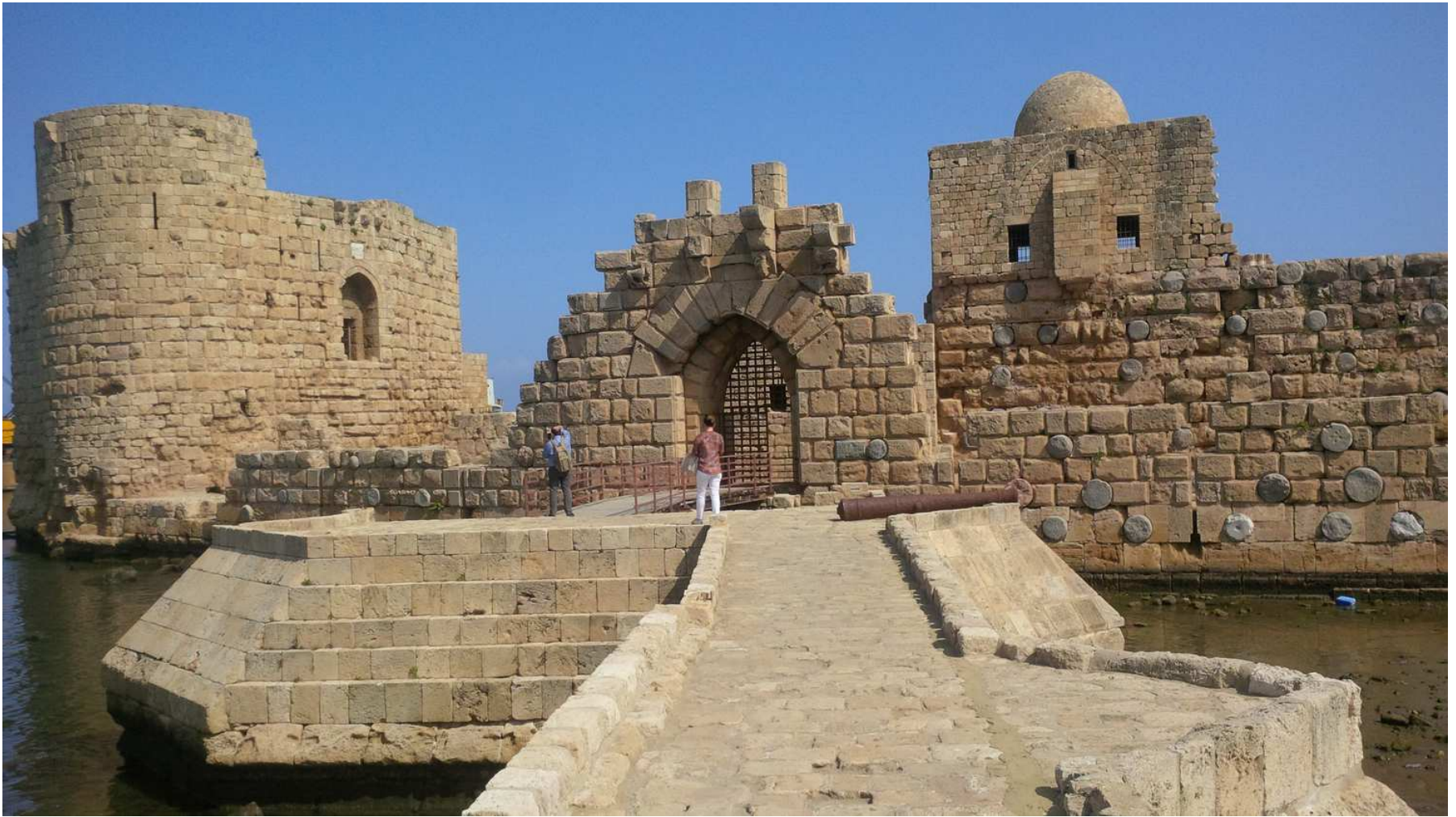
A Maronite church in Bziza.



One of the many old monasteries in the Qadisha Valley.



A closer look at the monastery.



A crusaders' castle in the harbour at Saida (Sidon).

An interior view of an Ottoman-era palace in Saida.

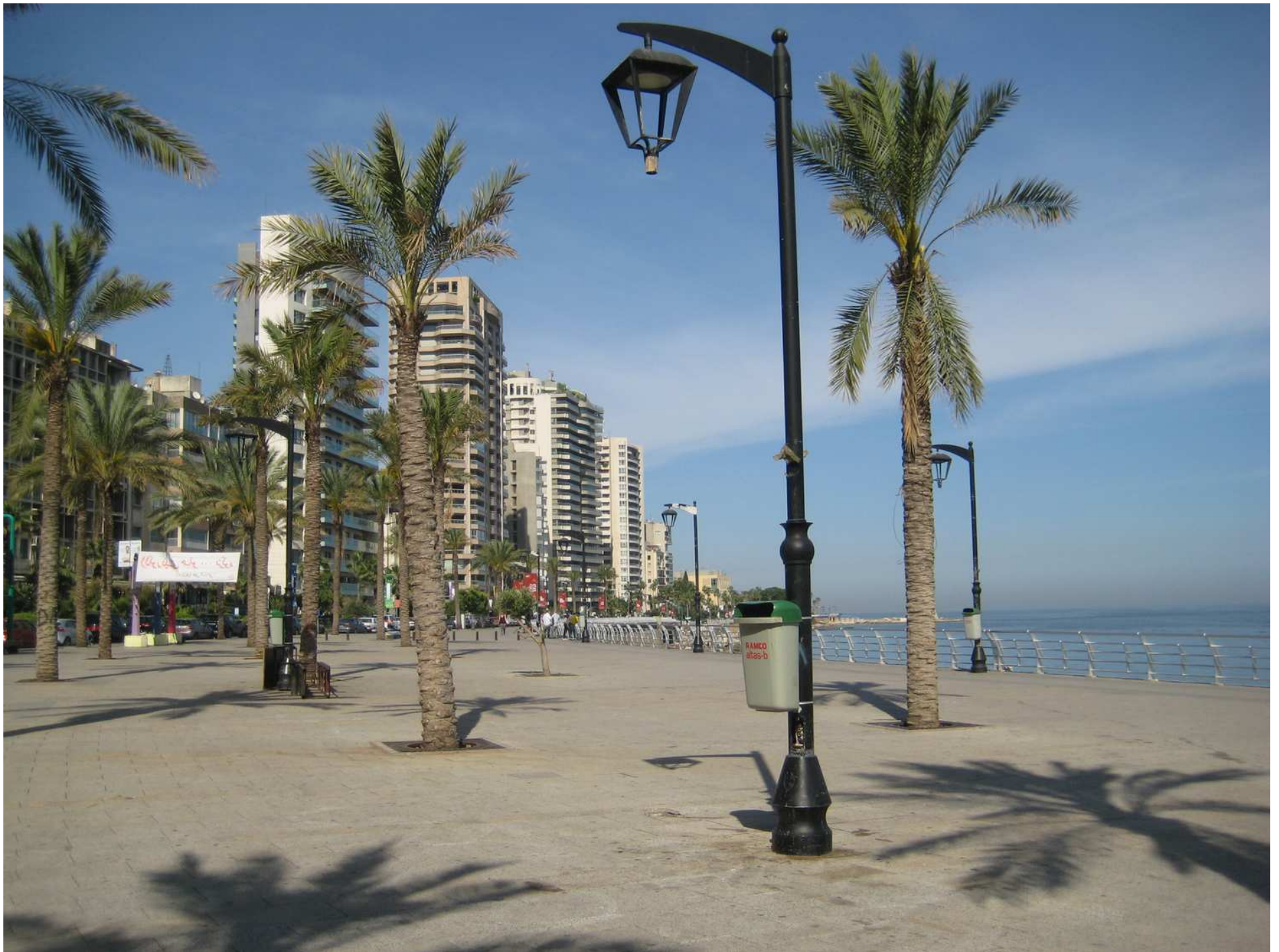


In an area of West Beirut almost entirely destroyed during the civil war, this tower symbolizes the more-or-less successful re-development of the city.





A very expensive part of the redeveloped area.



The Corniche, running along the Mediterranean Sea.



A typical street in the more traditional areas of Beirut.



Three views of Beirut rooftops from Amelia's balcony. Notice the frequency of solar panels.





Food





Terraced vegetable gardens in the middle of a town.



Every time we visited someone's home, food immediately appeared.





Amelia's favourite spiceshop in Beirut.





April in Bziza and the garden is ready for harvesting –



– because of greenhouses.

A typical grocery store in a mountain village, very often operated by Syrian immigrants.





The results of a shopping trip in the village of Batloun. The total cost came to less than US\$20.



The souk in Tripoli.



Looking down on Bisharri and the Qadisha Valley from a cliff-hanging restaurant, about 1900 metres above sea level.