The Republic of Lebanon is a country on the E shores of the Mediterranean Sea. Behind the coastal plain are the rugged Lebanon Mountains (Jabal Lubnán), which rise to 3,088m [10,131ft]. Another range, the Anti-Lebanon Mountains (Al Jabal ash Sharqi), form the E border with Syria. Between the two ranges is the Bekaa (Beqaa) Valley, a fertile farming region.

Climate

The Lebanese coast has hot, dry summers and mild, wet winters. Inland, onshore winds bring heavy rain or snow to the W slopes of the mountains in winter.

History

In c.3000 bc the Canaanites founded the city of Tyre and established what became known as Phoenicia. Invaders from c.800 bc included Egyptians, Hittites, Assyrians, Babylonians and Persians. Alexander the Great seized the area in 332 bc and the Romans in 64 bc. Christianity was introduced in ad 325, and in 395 the area became part of the Byzantine Empire. Muslim Arabs occupied the area in the 7th century; they converted many people to Islam, but Christian Maronites still predominated.

European Crusaders arrived in Lebanon in about 1100, and the area became a battlefield between Christian and Muslim armies. The Muslim Mamelukes of Egypt drove the last of the Crusaders out of the area around 1300. In 1516, Lebanon was taken over by the Turkish Ottoman Empire. Turkish rule continued until World War 1, when British and French forces defeated the Ottoman Turks. France took over Lebanon's political affairs from 1923 until 1944 with Lebanon becoming independent in 1946.

Politics

Lebanon made rapid economic progress until the late 1950s, when periodic conflict between Sunni and Shi’ite Muslims, Druze and Christians slowed development. In March 1975, fierce civil war broke out between Christians, Muslims and Druzes. Lebanon sank into a state of chaos. Assassinations, bombings and kidnappings became routine as numerous factions fought for control.

The situation was complicated by interventions by Palestinian refugees, the Syrian army, Western and then UN forces as the country became a patchwork of occupied zones and 'no-go areas'. The core religious confrontation has deep roots. In 1860 thousands of Maronites, who are aligned to the Roman
Catholic Church, were murdered by Druzes, who are so tangential to other Islamic sects that they are not now regarded as Muslims.

Although not directly involved, Lebanon was destabilized by the Arab-Israeli War of 1967 and by the exile of the PLO leadership to Beirut in 1970. By 1990 the Syrian army had crushed Christian rebels against the Lebanese government, but peace proved elusive. In 1996, Israeli forces launched a sustained attack on the pro-Iranian Hizbollah positions in southern Lebanon, with heavy civilian casualties. Fighting continued in southern Lebanon in 1997 and again flared up in early 2000. In 2005 former prime minister Rafik Hariri, a critic of Syria's presence in Lebanon, was assassinated. Following demonstrations, Syria withdrew its forces in April.

In 2006 Hizbollah launched rocket attacks on Israel from positions in Lebanon. Israel responded with ground and air attacks aimed at Hizbollah forces, which caused extensive civilian casualties and damage to Lebanon's infrastructure.

**Economy**

Civil war almost destroyed valuable trade and financial services which, together with tourism, had been Lebanon's chief source of income. Manufacturing was also hit. Manufactures include chemicals, electrical goods, processed food and textiles. Fruits, vegetables and sugar beet are farmed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>area</th>
<th>10,400 sq km [4,015 sq mi]</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>population</td>
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<tr>
<td>capital</td>
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<tr>
<td>government</td>
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<tr>
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<td>religions</td>
<td>Islam 70%, Christianity 30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>currency</td>
<td>Lebanese pound = 100 piastres</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Lebanon*
APA

Chicago

Harvard

MLA