

Syria - Travel facts and figures

Location: Syria is located on the East coast of the Mediterranean Sea. It is bounded by Turkey to the North, by Iraq to the East and Southeast, by Jordan to the South, and by Lebanon and Israel to the Southwest.

Government type: Presidential single party republic

National flag

National emblem

Geographic coordinates: 35°00′N, 38°00′E

Area: 185,180 sq km (71,498 sq mi).

Highest point: Mount Hermon 2,814 m

Lowest point: Lake Tiberias -200 m

Main River: The Euphrates

Population: 22,505,000 (2009 estimate)

Capital: Damascus

geographic coordinates 33°30′N, 36°18′ E

population: 1,711,000 (est. 2009)

Main Cities: Aleppo, Homs, Hama

Local Time: GMT + 2 hours
Summer (DST) + 3 hours

Life expectancy: 74,2 years

GDP – per capita: \$4,800 (2010 est.)

Visa:

Required by all nationals, passport valid for at least one month beyond the end of the visa. In countries where the Syrian Arab Republic does not have diplomatic representation, visitors can either apply by post to the nearest Syrian Embassy or can apply at the Syrian border. Whether or not you have a visa you should be aware that if your passport contains an Israeli stamp or stamps from other countries’ border crossing points with Israel, you will be refused entry to Syria. Further information at [Syrian Ministry of Tourism](#)

Safety:

Most visits to Syria are trouble-free, and crime levels are low. Terrorism is a risk, and although not usually directed at tourists. Syrians are among the most friendly and hospitable people in the world.

Currency:

The unit of the Syrian Currency is the Syrian Pound. The Syrian Currency has notes with the denominations of 1 Lira, 5 Lira, 10 Lira, 25 Lira, 50 Lira, 100 Lira, 200 Lira, 500 Lira, 1000 Lira. Coins in the Syria Currency include a Quarter Lira, Half Lira, 1 Lira, 2 Lira, 5 Lira, 10 Lira, 25 Lira.

Language:

Arabic is the official language, but English and French are widely spoken.

Customs: Import regulations:

Free import of:

- • 200 cigarettes or 25 cigars or 50 cigarillos or 250 grammes of tobacco,
- • 1 pint (0.570 litre) of spirits,
- • 30 grammes of perfume for personal use,
- • 0.5 litre of lotion and 0.5 litre of parfume,
- • gifts up to a value of SYP 250.

Prohibited:

- • Firearms and ammunition,
- • Live, frozen or stuffed birds or any bird derived products.

Export regulations:

Free export of any quantity of tobacco products and spirits.

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 in Damascus

Clothing: Lightweight summer clothing in cottons or blends is ideal for most of the year. Sweaters, a light jacket or a shawl may be needed for the cooler evenings. There are conservative standards of dress and behaviour in Syria, particularly around religious sites. You should take care not to offend. If in doubt, seek local advice.

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

Public Holidays in Syria, 2011

01 Jan	New Year's Day
15 Feb	Mouloud (Birth of the Prophet)
08 Mar	Revolution Day
17 Apr	Independence Day
24 Apr	Orthodox Easter
24 Apr	Easter
01 May	Labour Day
06 May	Martyrs' Day
31 Aug	Eid al-Fitr (End of Ramadan)
06 Oct	October Liberation War
06 Nov	Eid al-Adha (Feast of the Sacrifice)
26 Nov	Islamic New Year
25 Dec	Christmas Day

Weekend:

The official weekend is Friday and Saturday.

Electricity:

220/50Hz (European plug)

Alcohol:

Alcohol is common throughout the country.

Credit cards:

ATM's outside of Damascus are fairly uncommon, so cash is always best stocked up on while in Syria.

Business hours:

Saturday - Thursday 8 am - 2 pm. All government offices, banks and Muslim firms close on Fridays and remain open on Sundays; Christian firms are generally open on Fridays and closed on Sundays.

Health:

The standard of medical facilities in Syria's major cities is adequate for routine procedures. Most hospitals are well equipped and medicines are available. However, facilities and medicines may not be readily available in smaller towns or in outlying areas of the country.

Hotels:

More than 400 hotels provide a considerable choice with regards to costs. There are International Hotels in Damascus (Carlton, Four Seasons, Sheraton, Meridien), Lattakia (Meridien) Palmyra (al-Cham), Aleppo (Shahba al-Cham), and Deir al-Zor (Furat al-Cham).

Several youth hotels are available during the summer season in Damascus, Aleppo and Lattakia.

Facilities for the physically challenged:

Syria is starting to implement measures to improve conditions for its physically challenged people

Social Conventions

The Syrians take as much pride in their modern amenities as in their unique heritage and in the tradition of exquisite craftsmanship, and both should be appreciated. Visitors will enjoy the hospitality that is a deep-rooted Arab tradition and sharing the pleasures of an attractive Oriental way of life. It is customary to shake hands on meeting and on departure. A visitor will be treated with great courtesy and will frequently be offered refreshment, usually coffee. As a guest in someone's home or, more usually, in a restaurant, visitors should respect Arab customs and traditions. A souvenir from the visitor's home or company is well received. Conservative casual wear is suitable. Beachwear or shorts should not be worn away from the beach or poolside. Smoking follows Western habits and in most cases it is obvious where not to smoke. Smoking is prohibited in public from dawn to dusk during Ramadan.

Photography:

No attempt should be made to photograph anything remotely connected with the armed forces or in the vicinity of defence installations, which even includes radio transmission aerials. It is wise to take a good look at what will be appearing in the background before pointing the

Traffic system:

Vehicles are driven on the right side of the road.

Taxis:

The taxis are an easy way to get around Damascus, Aleppo and other cities. All licensed taxis carry meters.

Getting there:

By Air: Damascus (DAM), the main gateway to Syria, Aleppo (ALP) and Latakia (LTK) are connected with all continents by the national carrier Syrianair and major international airlines.

By land: Syria is connected by highways with Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Turkey. Rail Links go via Ankara (Turkey) and Istanbul. Change at Ankara for the Taurus Express to Aleppo.

By Sea: Through the two seaports of Latakia and Tartus on the Mediterranean

Getting around:

by Air: Syrianair flies from Damascus (DAM) to Aleppo (ALP), Deir Ezzor (DEZ), Latakia (LTK), Palmyra (PMS) and Al-Qamishli (KAC).

by Rail: The railway extends 2,200km. A service operates between Damascus - Aleppo - Deir Ezzor - Hassakeh - Al-Qamishli. A second line runs between Aleppo - Latakia - Baniyas - Tartous - Homs - Damascus - Daraa.

by Road: There are 25,887km (16,086 miles) of roads. Traffic systems are poor and there are numerous accidents. Second-class roads are unreliable during the wet season. The principal route is Aleppo to Damascus and Daraa.

by Bus: Services run from Damascus and Aleppo to most towns and are cheap, widely used, efficient and comfortable.

by Taxi: Shared taxis are available to all parts of the country. Service taxis (old limousines) run on major routes and cost up to 70% more than Karnak buses.

Internet country code: .sy

Telephone dialing code: + 963