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# NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

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# Lebanon

## A unique lifestyle in the Middle East

Despite its turbulent history, Lebanon has earned a reputation for the resilience of its economy and the commercial acumen of its people. Even today its nightlife remains vibrant, its traditional industries are flourishing and its property developers are investing in ambitious projects that have no shortage of prospective clients.

One such project is Beit Misk, a mountainous 655,500 square-metre residential community complex some 20 kilometres south of Beirut that combines state-of-the-art technology with piazzas, stairways and other characteristics of the traditional Lebanese village.

Beit Misk is the brainchild of Renaissance Holdings Chairman Georges Zard Abou Jaoude. "I was convinced that we could build an innovative model Lebanese village to the highest international standard," he says, "and my main concern was to create a residential community that was accessible to everyone – from people looking for one-bedroom apartments to those who need large family homes, and from those who can afford large villas to others who are interested in middle-class flats."

About one hour's drive further inland from the coast lie the vineyards of the Bekaa Valley and the country's oldest winery Chateau Ksara. Its flagship Chateau Ksara and Le Souverain limited edition have made it a household name both at home and abroad. "We are currently producing around three million bottles a year, 60 % of which are destined for the local market and the rest of which goes abroad," says Chairman Zafer Chaoui. "France, Great Britain, the USA and Canada are extremely important markets

for us, as is the Middle East. We are also looking into Japan and China."

Chateau Kefraya is also internationally renowned. Its Comte de M 2009 was the country's first to obtain 92/100 in *The Wine Advocate Review* and it exports to Brazil, Australia and Hong Kong as well as France, the US, Canada and Great Britain. "Our motto is *Semper Ultra*," says Chairman Michel de Bustros. "We only use grapes from the Valley and we are constantly evolving our methods, which makes us very much appreciated by international connoisseurs looking for the highest quality".

The Lebanese have also always been famous for their nightlife. Since it opened in 2003, SKYBAR has almost single-handedly put Beirut back on the map but the clubbers who flock there to its 2,500 capacity seafront location haven't seen anything yet. This fall its sister venue The ONE opens which according to Sky Management Chairman Chafic El-Khazen will be something else altogether. "We will be integrating 360-degree, 3D mapping technology that will project onto a 1,000 square meter surface within the club," he says.

Lebanon has no intention to lose its resilience – or its capacity to surprise. Those interested in opportunities in the country should contact The Investment Development Authority of Lebanon – IDAL, dedicated to promote Lebanon as a viable investment destination and to attract, facilitate and retain investments in the country. IDAL offers incentives and fiscal exemptions to investment projects in key economic sectors that meet the criteria stipulated by Investment Law 360.

