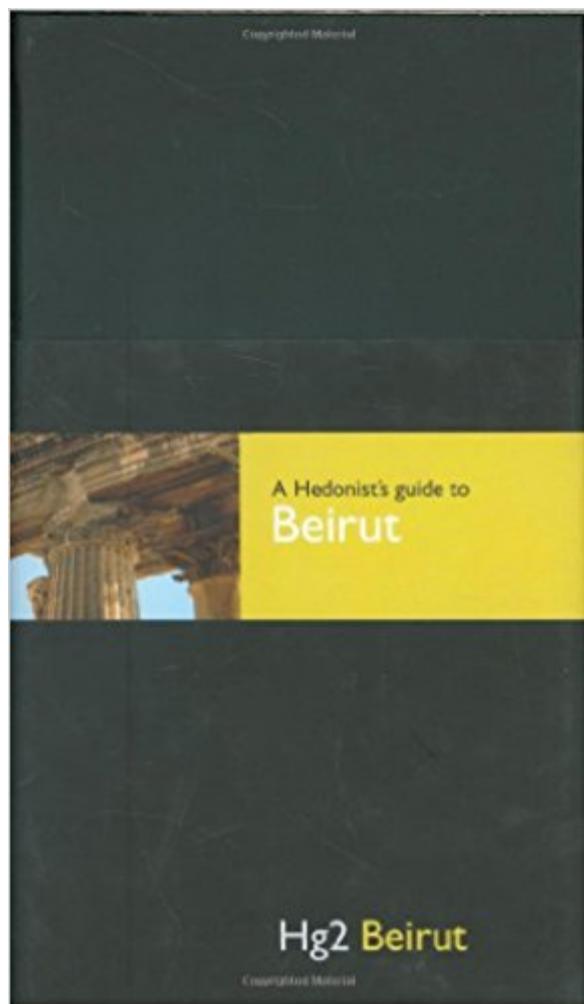


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Hedonist's Guide To Beirut 1st Edition (A Hedonist's Guide To...)



Synopsis

A Hedonist's guide to Beirut tackles one of the Middle East's most vibrant and exciting cities. The continued reconstruction of the city after one of the most publicised and bloody conflicts of the 1980s has seen a surge in designer restaurants, clubs and bars with an appetite for nightlife unparallelled elsewhere in the region. Ski in the morning, dive in the afternoon in the crystal clear waters of the Mediterranean before a little evening shopping in one of the many world class shops in the newly constructed downtown.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Ramsay Short was the Arts & Culture editor for the Lebanon Star and part-time DJ. He is now the editor of Time Out Beirut and has been living in the city for the last five years. He has reported on the troubles for Sky News and the BBC.

As a person who has lived in Beirut for most of my life, I found this book very accurate, straight to the point and reflective of the city's style and character. The book is perhaps one of a few books that looks at this battered nation from a leisure perspective and offers some good news at the time most other books available on the subject limit their literature to political news and regional conflicts. Not only Short takes in his book Beirut to a new perspective, his elegant style further enriches the Hedonistic dimension of the city as it presents an already entertaining city in a decorative, yet simple, language. The book is worth the money. Buy it and you'll find yourself boarding the first flight

to Beirut.

This is a useful accompaniment to any trip to Beirut, and at the moment is about the only guidebook available. American embassy staff commend it. Be forewarned, however, that my one attempt to use the maps led to a memorable adventure with a series of Beirut cab drivers, one of whom did eventually find Centrale, the restaurant I sought, but no thanks to the book.

As another reviewer mentioned, this is one of the few travel guides available for Beirut. Unfortunately, having been published in 2005, it's pretty dated. It also didn't turn out to focus on a significant portion of what I was interested in. Here are a few of the issues that I had. First, as I mentioned, the book is rather dated, having been published in 2005. It's not the writers'/publishers' fault that the statement about cross-border relations between Israel and Lebanon having been calm for the last few years - obviously outdated after 2006, and there's a lot more of that when you consider the events that have taken place in and around Lebanon since '05. Recent history, and other events since, obviously play a role in the character of present-day Beirut. This also comes into play when you figure that the book itself states that things change quickly in Beirut, particularly restaurants, hotels, and other aspects of the city that the book is specifically intended to provide guidance for. With respect to restaurants, of the two that I decided to try on a three day trip, one (Brookes in Gemayze) no longer existed; the other (Le Relais de l'Entrecote on Monot Street) was great, but that's still a 50% success rating based on the age of the book. Second, as another reviewer said, the maps aren't spectacular, especially since they basically don't include street names. I have extensive land navigation training and experience, and I've done London, Rome, Paris, Florence, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Belfast, and Dublin, all of them on foot. I found Beirut to be more difficult to navigate than most, and trying to do it with a map that lacks street names or other terrain features was an unnecessary hassle. The maps were basically worse than the free tourist pamphlet map that I got from the front desk at my hotel. Third, and probably most important, I found that HG2Beirut didn't really focus on what I was interested in seeing and doing in Beirut. Apparently the HG2 series prides itself on catering to a certain type of traveler, so if your travel plans revolve around which restaurants and hotels are the most trendy, then maybe the HG2 series fits you. When I travel, decent restaurants and good hotel recommendations are great, but I would tend to avoid restaurants that describe their food using the word "fusion" and the whole point of travel is getting out of your hotel room and seeing the location you've traveled to, and this is where HG2Beirut failed me most of all. It has a handful of listings in the book for "culture" locations, but

these listings are mediocre at best, and grossly incomplete. Case in point, I was eager to see the several Roman sites in Beirut, which are part of the city's multicultural and historical heritage - certainly the sort of thing that one would expect high minded people who are interested in fine dining and stylish hotels to be interested in. Of three Roman sites within a ten minute walk of one another near Parliament Square in downtown Beirut, HG2Beirut mentions only two, and if memory serves, only one is on the mediocre map for the downtown area - and that one is only listed as "archaeological remains". Would it have been that difficult to call it by name ("Cardo Maximus") and mention its purpose (a Roman market)? And what about the nearby Roman baths and the Roman hippodrome? If you're going to list cultural sites, why would you do such a mediocre job of it? Let's face it: if people were going to Beirut for its French restaurants and art galleries, they'd just go to Paris. People go to cities to see the things that make those cities unique and distinct, and to just gloss over those cultural aspects of the city sort of defeats the point of a travel guide, even if your focus is on the "hedonistic" aspects of the city. Charge me an extra dollar and give me some information that I can use to really enjoy the intricacies of the city - if you have to, cut a restaurant or hotel out to make space. It's not a difficult concept, and I promise that if someone is that focused on entertaining their senses, they're probably the kind of person who cares about the cultural and historical heritage of the city in question. In closing, I paid \$14 for an outdated book that confirmed what I was able to discern about my hotel, led me to one restaurant, gave me a few disposable tidbits of information about Beirut, had a few maps that were occasionally useful in conjunction with a regular street map pamphlet, and added some weight to my satchel while walking around the city. This book may have been adequate when it was published in 2005, but it failed to meet my expectations for a travel guide in 2012. I wouldn't recommend this book to anyone going to Beirut, and I wouldn't recommend the HG2 series to anyone I know. I'll be sticking with Lonely Planet and Let's Go! from here on out.

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