

VISITING THE PEARL OF ORIENT - A HAVEN OF ANCIENT CIVILIZATIONS



Damascus is a stunning city with a history that goes back several millennia. The ancient atmosphere bedazzles all who come here to admire local fascinating cultural heritage, leaving them speechless in this cradle of civilization.

The Middle East was once the richest and most developed area in the world. Many great civilizations created their impressive worlds here and it comes as no surprise that today, historians perceive it as **one of the most culturally captivating places**. One city in particular has survived thousands of years and even today is a cradle of culture and wealth. **Damascus in Syria is in fact the longest inhabited city in the world.**

It was founded in the 3rd millennium B.C. and quickly gained prosperity. It flourished as a center of craft industry and many of the ancient trade routes led through here. The Old City used to be the center of wealth and is now the most culturally prominent areas.

Its major landmark is the **Omayyad Mosque, built in 705 A.D.** However, its building site had already gained importance as a place of worship. In fact, in the 7th century, when Christianity was introduced here, both Muslims and Christians prayed here side by side. The mosque is a true tribute to the Muslim religion with walls covered with mosaic panels with incorporated colored and gilded glass.

The Azem Palace is another example of local taste and skill. The sharp contrast of the plain exterior with the artistic and sophisticated interior is very surprising. Today, the Azem Palace houses the Museum of Arts and Popular Traditions.

The Damascus Citadel, a city within city, deserves to be among the 'top five' as well. This magnificent fortress was erected in 1078 A.D. and was fully protected by walls, towers, moat, and trenches. Inside, there were houses, baths, mosques, or even schools.

When taking a stroll about the city, tourists will come across the famous Souqs which represent the true flavor of the East. The heavy oriental scent lingers about, while tradesmen present their colorful merchandise and recreate the atmosphere of ancient prosperity and fame, so bewitching and so different to the Western world.

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