

# Marine Heritage

## Lebanon's Lighthouses

### Linking culture to nature



### What is a lighthouse?

A lighthouse is a tower designed to emit light from a system of lamps and lenses and used as a navigation aid for maritime pilots at sea or on inland waterways. The light usually follows a certain pattern. Lighthouses mark entrance to ports, dangerous coastlines, hazardous shoals, reefs; assist in safe entries to harbors, and in aerial navigation.

### First lighthouse in history

The first lighthouse was built by the Ptolemaic Kingdom around 280 BC in Alexandria, Egypt, on the island of Pharos. It was one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World and one of the tallest man-made structures - more than 120m - in the world for many centuries. It was badly damaged by an earthquake in the 12th century then became an abandoned ruin. In ancient times, mariners were guided by fires built on hilltops since raising fire improved the visibility. Placing the fire on a platform became a widely used practice that led to the development of lighthouses.

### Terminology

The Arabic word for "lighthouse" is *manara*. "Ra" is the word for a cape or headland. The most famous lighthouse in history, Lighthouse of Alexandria, was built on the island of Pharos in Egypt. The name Pharos is still used as the noun for "lighthouse" in some languages and the term *pharology* is the study of lighthouses which is also derived from the island's name.

Language	Noun for lighthouse
Albanian, Catalan and Romanian	Far
French	Phare
Italian, Galician and Spanish	Faro
Portuguese	Farol
Danish, Norwegian and Swedish	Fyr

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### Status of Lighthouses in Lebanon

Lebanon has lighthouses all along its coast. There are lighthouses in Tyre, Saida, Beirut, Batroun and Tripoli. Unfortunately, most of these lighthouses are damaged, and unmaintained; thus abandoned and inactive. The number of operational lighthouses has declined due to the expense of maintenance and replacement by modern electronic navigational devices.



Saida's Lighthouse on Al Zire Island

### Introduction to MED-PHARES

In 2013, SPNL took part in the MED-PHARES project. Funded by ENPI CBC-MED Programme, the project aims to develop a model, applicable in all countries of the Mediterranean area, to highlight the uniqueness of the coastal heritage. The broader objective is to promote and contribute to these unique territories as resources for sustainable tourism development. Today, this heritage is often found abandoned and disconnected from the urban / rural life planning where it operates, and therefore ignored by the institutions and the local populations thus forming a missed opportunity for economic growth. The development of these sites will allow local people to reclaim the maritime heritage present in their territory. In parallel, tourists will enjoy a culturally valued territory enriched by a unique heritage.

## Lighthouses and people

Not only are the conditions of the lighthouses deteriorating but also the conditions of the lighthouse keepers'. The daily life of a lightkeeper was both demanding and tedious, and at all times it was focused on keeping the light burning brightly. The duties of the lightkeeper have changed during the years, and these changing duties have reflected changing technology and expectation.

## Lighthouses and SPNL

SPNL is trying to preserve and maintain the coastal heritage of Lebanon and its historical landmarks while drawing the attention to the plight of these beacons. The aim of this project is to try to keep as many lighthouses as possible in the care of local communities because of their marine heritage value, their symbolic significance and social meaning to the nearby communities and the public coastal land.

SPNL, a member of the Mediterranean Consortium, is interested in this project because it is already working on the protection of marine Himas such as: Hima Qolaleh, Hima Mansouri and Hima Byblos.

## Linking culture to nature

Preserving the lighthouses is part of conserving the marine coastal heritage. These beacons serve as a transitional zone between sea and land. They stand as a protector and a guard to the endangered species as such: sea turtles, and Mediterranean monk seals.

By conserving the lighthouse, we are not only reviving the natural and cultural resources but also the human resources such as the traditional practice of the lighthouse's keepers.

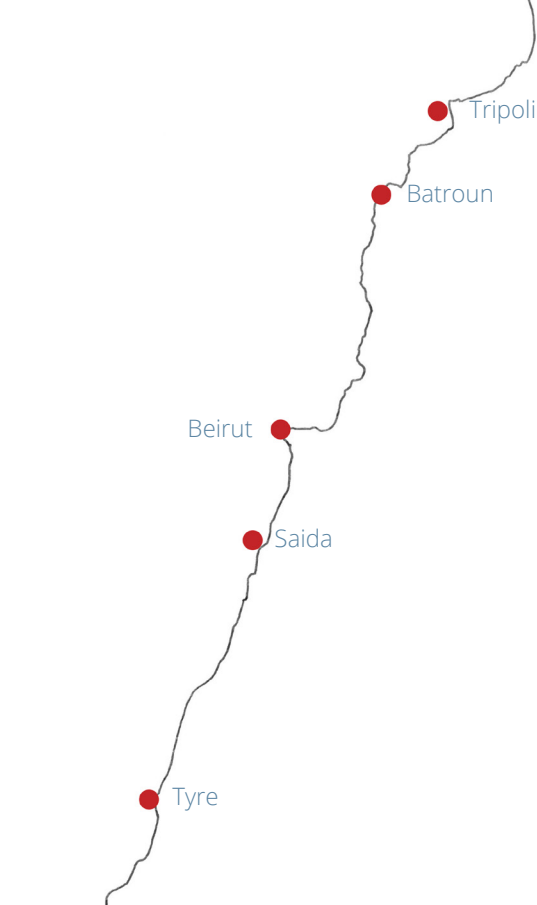


## Who can save the lighthouse?

Local community groups, supported by the local municipalities, stakeholders and decision makers, are most suitable to preserve lighthouses because these are the people whose ancestors kept the lights ongoing and who care deeply about them. They are the most likely to develop the sites in a sensitive and appropriate manner. The responsible government authorities would also add an important impact on the conservation of the remaining lighthouses of Lebanon. However, national and international cooperation is also needed as they offer committed support. In addition to that, NGOs play an essential role in the implementation of these kinds of projects.



Lighthouses are rich with symbolism and conceptual meanings. The lighthouse illustrates danger, risk, adversity, challenge and vigilance. But it also offers guidance, salvation and safety. The Lighthouse stands alone and tall in both light and darkness and it is a focal point which symbolizes safe harbor; it is a Spiritual "Welcome Mat" for all those who are traveling by sea.



Location Map of Lighthouses in Lebanon

## Lebanon's lighthouses

The total number of Lebanon's lighthouses is eight: Tripoli 1, Batroun 1, Beirut 3, Saida 2 and Tyre 1. Two of Lebanon's lighthouses were built on islands and are only accessible by boats. Tripoli and Saida's lighthouses were established on Ramkin and Zire islands respectively. Until this day, the Zire's lighthouse is still active. As for Beirut, it has three lighthouses: the old lighthouse, the port's lighthouse and the Manara lighthouse. Unfortunately, in July 2006, war broke out on the Israeli frontier, and during the five weeks of heavy fighting two of Beirut's lighthouses were damaged.

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