

## **'Plot' for the future**

Visiting Lebanon during the holiday season is always festive despite the traffic jams to skiing resorts, the long waiting lists at classy restaurants and the uncertainty of securing seats on any inbound airlines, for there are always a great number of educational, cultural and religious festivals all around the country.



Lebanese have a zest for life regardless of their daunting task to overcome power cuts, inflation and the traumatizing effects of political and security instability that have plagued the country for years on end. During the Christmas and New Year holidays, tourists and expatriates alike get to mix and mingle with classes of society which find strength in their ability to survive and joy in their spirited approach to life and renewal of everlasting hope for a better living.

And there are plenty of reasons to rejoice. Ironically, Lebanon is in the enviable position to regain the limelight it has once enjoyed in the pre-civil war years and once again become the 'land of opportunity' figuratively and literally speaking. On the heels of a devastating financial crisis that has bewildered the international community with no real solutions in sight, confidence in investing in Lebanese real estate is at an all time high. Property investors who found themselves with a lot to lose in once profitable enterprises suddenly have a 'lot' to gain in Lebanon.

If you're a family person and plan on playing Santa in 2009, there is still room under the Christmas tree to wrap a 'plot' and gift it to your loved ones.

This might be the wisest choice and most thoughtful gift you can make. It might be an apartment, a plot or even an office or a shop. Can you fathom the effect of wrapping in a red Christmas box a title deed for your son, or a nice apartment deed for your wife?

For those who are reluctant in investing in the real estate market, we offer them a tantalizing fact that takes place in the Western world, the Far East and the Middle East region. There are always upheavals and price fluctuation leading to major market meltdowns every 10-20 years. In comparison and for the past 30 years, the Lebanese real estate market, unfazed by wars, recession and instability, has maintained an upward trend, never suffering a setback.

If you're beginning to punch numbers in your calculator, relax. Plots could be purchased starting from \$1/m<sup>2</sup> and upwards. Plots in upper mountain areas

like East Sidon, the Chouf, the Batroun, the South, the Beqaa and the North can today be purchased in the price range of \$10/m<sup>2</sup> - \$25/m<sup>2</sup>. These come with mild slopes, and excellent sea and mountain views. Your loved ones can untie the ribbons of a box holding the deed to an 800m<sup>2</sup> – 1000m<sup>2</sup> slice of heaven where they can enjoy a secure investment with zero yearly taxes. Your cost: \$10,000 - \$25,000.

This is unheard of. In the first half of 2008, property prices increased by 40% compared to the same period in 2007. The Real Estate Registry recorded a 74.5% increase in sales transaction between January and November 2008, whereas principal real estate taxes have increased by 58.2% during the same period.

Wrapping a plot as a gift will reward the recipient as it will never expire in the fertile Lebanese soil- a treasured prize for Lebanese and non-Lebanese alike.



However, with the tremendous opportunity of buying land not escaping the eyes of foreign investors, Lebanese citizens are finding themselves with narrower choices in an already shrinking market where plots are scarce simply because Lebanon is a small country.

Wrap a plot and buy back a piece of Lebanon, our beloved and sacred land. Perform this 'deed' or risk trespassing, in your own country, onto private property where a foreign investor will now monopolize the joy of owning a beautiful piece of

your homeland.

This is your land, your heritage. Your ancestors have fought wars and spilled blood to preserve it for you and your children. Wrap a plot and make it the most generous, joyful and patriotic act you have ever made on Christmas and the most rewarding New Year resolution.

Merry Christmas & Happy New Year to all.

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