



# Syria

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## Prices

Throughout this chapter we have not cited prices for sleeping and eating listings, as most hotels and restaurants were closed at the time of writing. Instead of specific prices, we have indicated price categories, from budget to top end (see p446 and p447 for more detail). The price ranges for these categories were applicable before hostilities began, and should be used as a rough guide only.

## Why Go?

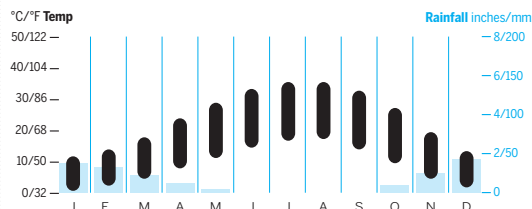
At the time of writing, you can't go: if you can, you shouldn't. Peaceful protests that began in early 2011 have grown into an armed uprising against the Assad regime. A year later, and despite the UN and Arab League calling for an end to violence, the Syrian army continues to shell and shoot its citizens. Homs has become the most widely reported battleground, but there is violent conflict across the country.

How long this will continue is impossible to guess. When it ends, the wealth of historic sites, from Palmyra in the desert to the Crac des Chevaliers, within sight of the Mediterranean, will lure us back and the gracious hospitality of Syrians will warm us to their country.

As we have been unable to visit Syria, we have updated this chapter by phone and email, and by asking advice and information from Syrians still in the country.

## When to Go

### Damascus



**Mar–Apr** Spring along the coast and then in the hills, which are carpeted with flowers.

**Jun–Jul** Scorching in the desert but magical on the Mediterranean.

**Sep–Oct** Autumn brings rich light and lower temperatures. Perfect.



## Syria Highlights

- 1 Walk **Damascus Old City** (p401) and step into the past
- 2 Shop in **Aleppo's souqs** (p430) for silks as well as sheep's heads
- 3 Be scrubbed down in a medieval **hammam** (bath), to be found all across the country
- 4 Storm the **Crac des Chevaliers** (p419), the finest castle in the world
- 5 Spend a day in **Bosra** (p415) to appreciate its brooding ruins
- 6 Cross the desert to the majestic ruins of **Palmyra** (p436), one of the most picturesque
- 7 Sit in a **cafe** anywhere to appreciate the charm and friendliness of Syrians
- 8 Visit the place where **St Simeon** stood on his pillar (p432) to understand the passion of early Christianity