



ORDER OF MALTA  
CARAVAN PROJECT



CARAVAN

SERVE. PRAY. GROW. TOGETHER



PROJECT  
DESCRIPTION



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## INTRODUCTION

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# THE ORDER OF MALTA

The Sovereign Order of Malta is a lay religious order of the Catholic Church since 1113 AD and a subject of international law. It is a neutral, impartial, and apolitical organisation and active in 120 countries around the world.

The Order of Malta cares for people in need through its medical, social and humanitarian works. It is especially involved in helping people living during armed conflicts and natural disasters by providing medical assistance, caring for refugees, and distributing medicines and basic equipment for survival. Across the world, the Order of Malta is dedicated to the preservation of human dignity and the care of all those in need, regardless of their origin or religion. The Order of Malta operates in 130 countries through Pories, national Associations, diplomatic missions, national volunteer corps, as well as numerous medical centres etc.

The Order of Malta CARAVAN is a joint project of the Lebanese and the German Association of the Order of Malta. The strong ties and deep friendship between the two Associations through the many projects in Lebanon has resulted in the cooperation of setting up the CARAVAN Project in 2009 together. Since then, the project has been financed and managed in mutual cooperation.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

THE ORDER OF MALTA  
[www.orderofmalta.int](http://www.orderofmalta.int)

THE GERMAN ASSOCIATION  
[www.malteser.de/malteserorden](http://www.malteser.de/malteserorden)

THE LEBANESE ASSOCIATION  
[www.orderofmaltalebanon.org](http://www.orderofmaltalebanon.org)

# HISTORY OF THE CARAVAN PROJECT

## THE PROJECT LEBANON

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In Lebanon, as in most Arabian countries, people with disabilities live under unbearable living conditions. The homes for people with disabilities in Lebanon are run by nuns of the Order of the Sisters of the Cross. The Government's funding is not even enough to cover all medical requirements, social aid or housing costs let alone therapies or meaningful occupation for the inhabitants. The sisters rely on extra funding. Still life in the facilities must be reduced to an absolute minimum.

Because of this, since 1997 the Youth of the Order of Malta in Germany (Gemeinschaft junger Malteser, GjM) has sent young Europeans to Lebanon to conduct Holiday Camps for people with disabilities. The holiday camps take place in the Center al Fhadi, a center specially designed to serve the needs of people with disabilities, it is situated 60km northeast of Beirut and belongs to the Lebanese Association of the Order of Malta.

See [www.libanonprojekt.de](http://www.libanonprojekt.de) on many years of tradition.

## THE CARAVAN PROJECT

The CARAVAN Project was founded in 2009 to serve our friends with disabilities throughout the year and bring joy and love into their everyday lives in the homes. CARAVAN Project also offers young people the opportunity to do voluntary social work in the spirit of the Order of Malta and to grow in their personality, faith, and knowledge together in a group of peers.

Since its beginning more than 150 young adults have joined the CARAVAN Project from all over the world. Through their presence and social involvement, they have participated in changing the everyday life of disabled people in Lebanon.

The name “CARAVAN” has a long tradition in the Order of Malta. Originally all men wanting to join the Order of Malta had to spend two years of caravan on the isle of Malta. This was a time of preparation and training: were the young men intensively cared for the sick and needy and trained to become a knight - a person of honor, truth and confidence. The CARAVAN Project today reflects on many years of tradition.

## THE VISION OF CARAVAN

The Vision of the 10-month program is *to form a generation of confident young adults that bring change through Christian faith and service to the sick and needy worldwide.*

## WHY LEBANON?

Lebanon is part of the Holy Land and therefore a place of special grace for the Order of Malta and the Christians in general. It is one of the very rare places in the world where over 18 religious denominations live together. It is a cultural melting pot nowhere else to be found and therefore a very interesting surrounding to offer young adults’ formation in faith and personality.

The main reason to conduct CARAVAN in Lebanon are the strong ties and deep friendship that binds the German and Lebanese Association of the Order together. There has been a cooperation throughout many projects in Lebanon. Especially the youth of both associations has been serving together via Project Lebanon in Chabrouh and other places for more than 20 years.



# SUPPORT STRUCTURE OF THE CARAVAN PROJECT

## STEERING COMMITTEE

The Steering Committee is responsible for the conceptual design of the program and makes all decisions on the strategic level. The Steering Committee consist of four people: One representative of the German and one of the Lebanese Association plus one representative from each of the youth organisations (Gemeinschaft junger Malteser GJM – Germany, Order of Malta Volunteers OMV - Lebanon).

## PROJECT MANAGEMENT

### **CARAVAN Coordinator Germany**

The CARAVAN Coordinator Germany works and lives in Germany and is responsible for recruitment, marketing, fundraising and is the contact person for the CARAVAN Parents.

### **CARAVAN Coordinator Lebanon**

The CARAVAN Coordinator Lebanon is situated in Beirut, Lebanon and manages the local operational business of the project and is the contact person on site for the CARAVAN Team.

## CARAVAN ALUMNI

The Alumni Circle is a worldwide net of former participants of the Project.

Each Alumni is invited to stay connected to the CARAVAN Project through different activities: For example, different fundraising activities supporting the project. Or the CARAVAN Buddy Program that puts Alumni in contact with the current CARAVAN Team to answer their questions and provide useful tips.

The Activities of the Alumni are coordinated through the Alumni Board: a group of six Alumni from different CARAVAN teams. The Alumni board aims to offer a platform and support the different activities of the Alumni.



Through its outstanding program the CARAVAN Project offers its participants much more than a “traditional” Gap Year program. The four pillars of the CARAVAN Program – Serve, Pray, Grow, Together - are a unique mixture especially designed to fulfill the mission of the project.

## TIMELINE

The program usually starts in August und ends by the end of June the following year.

### PREPARATION PHASE & WRAP UP TIME

The CARAVAN Project starts with an intensive preparational phase and ends with a closing time (so-called Wrap-u time).

#### Preparation Phase

The aim of the preparational phase is to prepare the participants in the best possible way for every aspect of the program. It will be split up in a two-week preparational time in Germany near Frankfurt followed by another 5 days of preparation time in Lebanon.

#### Preparation Phase in Germany

##### Serve

- ✘ What to expect
- ✘ Caring for people with disabilities.
- ✘ First-Aid-Course

##### Pray

- ✘ Vocation as a discovery of life
- ✘ Prayer in community (Liturgy of the hours, adoration etc.)
- ✘ Spirituality & history of the Order of Malta & Project Lebanon

##### Grow

- ✘ From the individual to the community (individual strengths and personal challenges)
- ✘ Mental health
- ✘ Safeguarding & Protection
- ✘ Drug/Alcohol abuse - general effects and how to handle
- ✘ Culture in Lebanon & What to be aware of

##### Together

- ✘ Team building activities
- ✘ Feedback & Criticism
- ✘ Music and Choir work
- ✘ Discussing code of conduct / Alumni question round etc.

### Preparation Time in Lebanon

- ✘ Welcoming Mass/Dinner to get to know the friends of the project
- ✘ Introduction to the Lebanese Association of the Order of Malta & it's Youth (OMV)
- ✘ Safety & Security Lebanon – Current Situation of the country
- ✘ Sightseeing - get to know the new home, surrounding, Beirut
- ✘ Lebanese Culture: dance, cooking lessons... etc.
- ✘ Get to know the homes for people with disabilities
- ✘ Get to know the Order of the Sisters of the cross
- ✘ Introduction to service and the people with disabilities

### Wrap-Up Time in Lebanon

The aim is to help the participants reflect on the past 10 months, take time for farewells and to send them well prepared into their future lives. The Wrap-Up Time will take place in the last weeks of the CARAVAN program in Lebanon: starting with a four-days silent retreat in the mountains to gather the individual fruits of the time in the program, followed by a two day workshops to get detailed feedback and gather the shared experiences. The program will end with a send-off liturgy.

## SERVE

Serving the most vulnerable of Lebanon's people is the core of the everyday CARAVAN life: each day the participants spend up to four hours in the three different facilities for people with disabilities.

The three facilities namely Deir el Salib, Deir el Kamar and Antelias are run by the Christian nuns of the Catholic order "Sisters of the Cross". The people living in the facilities are men, women, and children with different mental and/or physical disabilities.

In Lebanon, as it is in many other countries, disabilities are still seen as an infamy and a forfeit of God. Therefore, the support and interest of both state and public for such facilities is very low. This results in a lack of staff who can "only" take care of the basic needs of the residents: shelter, food, and basic hygiene. Due to lack of professional treatment or therapy the residents develop abnormal behaviour, such as stereotype movements, aggressiveness, and self-injuring habits. Furthermore, due to the lack of personal relationships they grow in mental sadness, withdrawal, and apathy.

The aim of the daily service is therefore to alleviate the suffering by spending time with them, reducing their loneliness and bring joy. The CARAVAN Team will therefore set up different activities, conduct simple physiotherapy but mostly give time and love. Additionally, the CARAVAN Team will support the caretakers to distribute the meals to the residents of the three facilities. They will not be involved in the daily hygiene in the homes: such as showering, changing of diapers or going to the toilet.

### Holiday Camps

After the preparational time in both Germany and Lebanon the CARAVAN Team will take part in the Summer Camps of the Youth of the German Association: three weeks of holiday camps. Throughout the 10 months of CARAVAN the CARAVAN Team will join different holiday camps for people with disabilities. The holiday camps take place in the “Centre Al Fhadi” in the mountains of Beirut in Chabrough. Each holiday camp lasts for six days. Together with other volunteers (mostly German and Lebanese) the CARAVAN Team will take care of people with disabilities through a one-on-one care: during each camp each volunteer is entrusted with one “guest”. During the camp the volunteers have the complete responsibility for the care, food, and entertainment of our Lebanese guests. The aim of the holiday camps is to offer total attention and absolute acceptance and to have a lot of fun.

### Alternative Service

During the CARAVAN Project the team will also take part in different alternative service projects of either local NGOs or the Lebanese Association of the Order of Malta: For example, distribute food in local food kitchens, organise activities in refugee camps or help on local building sites.

## PRAY

The CARAVAN Projects aims to offer each participant the opportunity to grow in the personal relationship with God and strengthen their personal faith. It is the foundation on which the projects of the Order of Malta have been built: On the union of service and faith. Throughout the 10 months the CARAVAN Team therefore takes part in different spiritual activities:

### Prayer

The team prays daily as a group: in the morning, before they start their service and in the evening. The daily prayer enables the participants to grow in their personal relationship with God by sharing their encounters, thoughts, longings, and troubles with him- and in their relationship and appreciation for each other.

Once a month the Team organizes an adoration night in a church nearby their apartment: here they encounter God through silence, music, and prayer together with the local community.

### Spiritual Formation

Once a week the CARAVAN Team organizes a spiritual evening where they invite one of the priests associated to the project to discuss a specific topic. The topics are chosen by the team. The spiritual evening enables the participants to learn more about the Christian faith.

### Spiritual Retreats

The team will take part in spiritual retreats and spend one to four days of recollection and prayer. Through this intimate time with God the participants are enabled to examine their life and person, see where they are in their relationship with God and others and define how they want to move forward.



## GROW

### Academic growth: university courses

The Faculty of Religious Sciences of Saint Joseph University (USJ) in Beirut has designed a 16 credits tailor-made “Certificate of Study in the Historical and Religious Reality of the Middle East” for the CARAVAN Project. The university courses offered by the program aim to give an overview of the different religions (Christian, Muslim and Jewish faith) in the Middle East and their influence on the political, social, and economic level. The courses are always followed by complementary field trips.

The Certificate of Study in the Historical and Religious Reality of the Middle East consists of the following courses:

- ✘ Religion, Democracy and Human Rights
- ✘ History of Lebanon
- ✘ Druze
- ✘ Judaism
- ✘ Lebanon before, during and after the war
- ✘ Islam (Sunnism & Shiism)
- ✘ Interreligious Dialogue in the Middle East: The Case of Lebanon
- ✘ Different Christians communities

### Arabic Courses

The CARAVAN Team will get the chance to study Arabic: Twice a week they will participate in colloquial Lebanese lessons held by a private Arabic teacher.

Learning Lebanese will offer the participants a deeper understanding of the Lebanese culture. But above all it will grant the possibility to talk and understand the people they serve - which is a matter of respect and dignity and should therefore be pursued with utmost seriousness by everyone in the project.

### Personal Growth

Since 2022 the CARAVAN Project offers a tailored Personal Growth program. The time after leaving one’s family for the first time and starting a new very different period in life is an exciting but at times quite challenging journey. The time in Lebanon naturally changes the participants: Service, prayer, group life, new input and experiences will make the participants change and grow. The aim of the Personal Growth program is to accompany and support the participants in that change: the discovery of their new role in life, the development of their personality and of their personal strengths and challenges. It is a journey to grow in self-awareness and develop resilience, mental health and confidence in life and to be able to do Gods work assigned to every one of us.

### Introduction

During the preparation time in Germany the team will undertake different personality tests. The aim is to help the participants to start to know themselves and the rest of the team better. They are helped to become aware of their own and the others’ abilities, needs and limitations and to start the program with a basic understanding of each other.

The participants will also learn about general mental health issues, work out their own personal warning-signals and resources and share this with the group.

### Main Part

In Lebanon monthly logo-therapeutical workshops and coaching sessions are integrated into the program. The aim is to discover talents more deeply, grow in their own personality, prepare for challenges in life and progress on the path to find a meaningful career/vocation. The Logo-therapy Method aims to equip the participants to find meaning in their lives - even in the most challenging circumstances. During these workshops the following three methods are used:

1. Five three-hour workshops paired with an exercise (individually or in small groups)
  - ✗ Meaning & Purpose Discovery - Bible based logotherapy
  - ✗ Meaning, Purpose, Mental health
  - ✗ Values
  - ✗ Finding optimism in challenging times- how to transform challenges into triumphs
  - ✗ Success through meaning & purpose. Purposeful leadership
2. Three One-on-One Coaching Sessions with the Logotherapy Coach were the participants talk about the topics discussed in the workshops and whatever personal issues they are confronted with at the moment.
3. Two Purpose in Life (PIL) tests at the beginning & end of the program that aim to help the participants discover their current status (concerning their life goals, their contentment, etc.).

### Closure

The Personal Growth Program closes with a Wrap-up Workshop to reflect on the past ten months, to gather insights and get the teams feedback on the program. This workshop will also help to gather and structure the personal impressions and experiences and have a look back on how everyone started and what has changed. Then the future is put into view: What is there to look forward to, what is scary and challenging. What can be done to preserve the experience and friendships. What have I learned about myself that I still want to expand, continue, integrate into my new life. etc.?

## TOGETHER

### Living in Community

Up to ten international participants will spend 10 months living, serving and praying together. On the one hand this intensive experience as a group can be a great challenge and will require a lot of discipline and compromises.

On the other hand, through experiencing CARAVAN together the participants will form deep and meaningful friendships that can last for a lifetime. They will learn to live and participate in a domestic community and learn to organize all the housekeeping responsibilities and daily community life.

Living together will also enable them to adapt in groups and to grow in their social competences. Through weekly feedback rounds and reflection, the CARAVAN team will learn to criticize well and to support each other in their individual growth process. Each CARAVAN participant will be in charge of specific tasks (Team Leader, Prayer Master, Service Officer, etc.) during the CARAVAN time, this will help each one to become responsible and pay attention to the needs of the group.

### Order of Malta Family

The CARAVAN Project is part of the bigger community within the Order of Malta. The team members will be seen as representatives of Order of Malta during their time in Lebanon.

The members of the Lebanese Association will be the hosts and do their best to make the team feel welcome.

Each CARAVAN participant during their CARAVAN time will become a member of the Order of Malta Volunteers (OMV). This membership enables every participant to take part in all the youth volunteering activities of the Order of Malta in Lebanon. Being part of the OMV will also give each participant the chance to meet other volunteers and dive into the culture of Lebanon.

The Order of Malta is an international organization and offers many volunteering activities in different countries. Therefore, each participant of the CARAVAN Project will – after their time in Lebanon – automatically be invited to join the different volunteering opportunities in their home country and stay connected to the Order of Malta.



## SAFETY & SECURITY

### The current situation in Lebanon

Lebanon has been hit hard since 2019, with many multiple crises happening one after the other. The Covid epidemic, the Beirut Port Blast, the following accelerated Brain drain, and the continuous hyperinflation of the last years have shaken up the country and its people.

Contrary to many preconceived concepts, there is no problem in Lebanon in being a Christian or coming from the West. There has been no political kidnapping of western Christians in Lebanon. The escalations that can be seen in the media have mainly taken place between Shiite and Sunni Muslims.

Nevertheless, it cannot be guaranteed that there will be no escalation during the time of CARAVAN. Similarly, there can be no guarantee for someone travelling in South America or Africa that there will be no danger. What can be guaranteed however, is that the security situation is carefully studied by the Security Council of the Order of Malta Lebanon (OML) at all times.

### Security Council OML

The security of the CARAVAN Team will be carefully studied through the OML Security Council which has more than 20 years of experience in supporting foreign teams. The Security Council continuously watches the safety and security situation of Lebanon and defines security levels for each area. The security level clarifies whether the CARAVAN Team needs to take specific measures like not visiting specific areas of Lebanon etc.

The CARAVAN Team will only visit places considered to be safe. If there were to be an escalation, the Lebanese Association of the Order of Malta will immediately take all necessary measures for protection and eventual evacuation of the volunteers.

#### SECURITY LEVELS

COLOUR	DESCRIPTION
GREEN	All is well, touristic season is expected to be flourishing.
YELLOW	Political tension without any military action or safety issue.
ORANGE	Critical but stable situation with some localized military actions or safety issues.
RED	Unstable and/or risky situation with spread military action.

Even though we cannot give final statements towards the political situation, we do everything necessary to keep the CARAVAN Teams safe and avoid every kind of risk or danger!

The various social actions of the Order of Malta throughout Lebanon (alone and in cooperation with many different Christian as well as Muslim groups) have proven that the Order of Malta is accepted and trusted across all political and religious borders. They are very well networked and most competent to assess the security situation.

Still, no guarantee can be given. Therefore, CARAVAN will only take participants to Lebanon who are aware of the political and security situation and who will sign a waiver that they will participate at their own risk.



JOIN CARAVAN

### Application Process

As CARAVAN is a joint project of the German and the Lebanese association of the Order of Malta the application process is monitored by both parties.

The application is handed in through the website of the CARAVAN Project: here the applicant will be asked to fill out an application form, upload one or two personal references and a personal picture. The application form can be found here:

[www.orderofmalta caravan.com/application](http://www.orderofmalta caravan.com/application)

If the application fits the requirements below the applicant will be invited for the interviews in a four-step process.

- ✘ The first Interview will take place in Frankfurt with the German side of the Steering Committee, the CARAVAN Coordinator Germany and the Project Psychologist. This interview will allow us to get to know the applicant in person, to ensure that the program is well understood and that all requirements for participation in the program are met.
- ✘ After the first interview, the Project Psychologist will have a one-on-one talk with the applicant to talk about his/her mental and physical fitness for the program. This part will remain strictly confidential.
- ✘ The Project Psychologist will have a short phone talk with the parents of the CARAVAN applicant to ensure that family support is in place.
- ✘ This will be followed by an online Interview with the Lebanese side of the Steering Committee and the Lebanese Coordinator. This interview will also ensure that the applicant offers sufficient English language skills to engage in the CARAVAN program.

Afterwards the applicant will receive feedback on whether he/she is accepted to join the CARAVAN Project.

The current application date and date for the interviews with the German side of the Steering Committee can be found on our website.

### Requirements for Participants

- ✘ Age: 18 – 23 years
- ✘ Completed Second level Education or comparable education.
- ✘ Enthusiasm & willingness to take part in every part and the full length of the program: Service, Prayer, Formation and Community.
- ✘ Excellent English skills
- ✘ Acceptance to abide by the Code of Conduct.
- ✘ Certainty of Sufficient Mental & Physical Health to take part in the program.
- ✘ Strong communication skills, respect for others, flexibility, and openness to take criticism.
- ✘ Ability to pay a monthly participation fee or confirmation of cost reduction through the project.

## COSTS

Every participant will have to pay a monthly contribution for accommodation, food, transport, the university fees, formational workshops and field trips. The actual costs per person adds up to 1.800€/month.

### **Participation Fee**

The participants/their parents are asked to cover as much of the costs as possible, at least 750€/month plus the flight costs (500-700€).

Further deductions, if needed, can be requested by reaching out to the CARAVAN Coordinator DE, and will be decided according to the current financial situation of the project.

### **Pocket money**

The project takes care of accommodation, transportation, education, food and monthly field trips. Everything else like individual weekend programs is paid by the participants. We recommend planning an amount of 200 USD per month for personal pocket money.

### **Donate for the CARAVAN Project**

Other than the participant contributions the CARAVAN Project is entirely donor funded. As the participants only pay a approx. one third of the actual costs the Project depends on alternative funding and donations. Participants are asked to engage in the fundraising also already before starting their journey. In addition, we are very grateful for any helpers or donors.

If you are interested to donate or fundraise for the program visit our website or contact us via [assistance.caravan@malteser.org](mailto:assistance.caravan@malteser.org).



## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

### ✘ Accommodation

The CARAVAN Team will live in a spacious apartment in a secure area of Beirut: Biyyada. There the Team will live in rooms with 2-3 beds each. The apartment additionally includes a dining area, a living room, kitchen and a huge terrace. As the apartment is already furnished the participants will only need to bring their personal belongings.

### ✘ Transport

Since public transport in Beirut is very bad, the CARAVAN Project provides the team with a bus and a driver: For the official scheduled trips (University; service in the homes etc.) the team will be driven by the CARAVAN driver in the bus. For private trips in Beirut the CARAVAN Team will use safe taxis.

### ✘ Health

Each participant will be asked to fill out a health statement together with his/her parents stating that they are fit to join the CARAVAN Project. To ensure safety the CARAVAN team will also get a Medical Check-up with a doctor of the Order of Malta. If an applicant has any kind of serious chronic illness, (Diabetes or others), it is very much recommended to discuss this with an expert before leaving for Lebanon. Experiences of the last years have shown that the change in food and atmosphere can cause problems for some people.

### ✘ Vaccination

Additionally, we ask each participant to get the following vaccinations to join the program: Polio, Diphtheria, Tetanus and Hepatitis A & B.

These vaccinations normally need to be done quite some time before the departure to Lebanon. It is therefore, highly recommended to have them done as soon as possible.

### ✘ Insurance

The participants need to insure themselves with international health insurance, third party liability and accident insurance

### ✘ Currency and payments in Lebanon

The currency of Lebanon is Lebanese pound or Lebanese lira (LBP). The current hyperinflation due to the economic crisis causes the exchange rate to vary drastically. We therefore ask each participant to bring their pocket money in cash (in US Dollars) when they come to Lebanon.



## CONTACT INFORMATION

Further information can be found on our website:

[www.orderofmaltacaravan.com](http://www.orderofmaltacaravan.com)

Instagram:

[www.instagram.com/orderofmaltacaravan](https://www.instagram.com/orderofmaltacaravan)