

# Overview of the ecosystem of Saidoun



**Altitude:** Saidoun consists of 3 hills whose altitudes range from 530 to 830 meters.

**Climate:** Mediterranean (medium mountain).

**Natural landscapes:** Rocky areas covered by shrubs, bushes and aromatic plants, particularly dill; a deep layer of flatland covered by grass and dedicated to the cultivation of wheat and legumes; a deep layer of steep oak forests.

**Rocks:** essentially dolomite limestone, with some siliceous infiltrations to the South-West and sandstone to the North.

**Flora:** 416 species of plants identified, including 25 endemic to the Eastern basin of the Mediterranean, 10 species of orchids and 7 specimens of Juniper (*Juniperus oxycedrus*).

**Wildlife:** 50 species of animals, including many mammals such as porcupines, wild boars, jackals, foxes, badgers and hedgehogs. Birds: jays, Palestine sunbirds, European orioles, chukar partridges, carrion crows, house sparrows, European goldfinches, greenfinches, grey shrikes.



**Migratory birds:** Saidoun lies on the main routes of birds migrating to and from Europe. In one week of September, nearly 4,000 Pomarine eagles cross the sky of the village a day, in addition to these raptors, the following species of birds can be seen: white storks, greylag cranes, white pelicans, European night-hawks, swifts, fireplace swallows and European bee-eaters.

**Agriculture:** Specialty (declining): tobacco. Also, olives, figs, grapes, mulberries and wheat. Seasonal vegetable crops include the following species: cabbages, lettuces, tomatoes, sesame, chickpeas, onions, beans, parsley, purslane and other edible plants. Farm animals include pigs and laying hens, in addition to thriving beekeeping activity (Saidoun honey is famous in the region).



**History:** No serious study has addressed the history of the village so far. Local tradition traces the origin of Saidoun to Phoenician times. The Phoenician name Saidoun is itself an argument in favor of this hypothesis, as it was carried by the current city of Sidon (Saida) from Phoenician times. Moreover, the village is part of the hinterland of Great Sidon. Saidoun contains many vestiges of this time, including burial grounds, pottery, wells carved into the rock and the foundations of a defense tower. The Lebanese historian May Murr believes Saidoun was the summer town of the Phoenician coastal town of the same name, based on its strategic geographical position and its lush vegetation. The actually documented period starts around the XVth century when Saidoun became a farmland belonging to the Druze family Abdel Samad (originally from Amatur, in the Chouf caza). The village was not actually inhabited, but only kept and protected by the owners. In the early XIXth century, the ancestors of the present inhabitants, Maronite Christians from the nearby valley of Qattine, started buying parts of the territory. 100 years later, most of the land was sold and the settlers from Kattine moved in, building agricultural terraces and houses. The great earthquake of 1956 destroyed most of the village, leaving only 2 stone houses standing but badly damaged. Occupied in 1982 by the Israeli army, Saidoun suffered from the conflicts of the Lebanese civil war and its consequences . The village is currently experiencing a slight recovery in agricultural, social and cultural development, which requires a sustainable continuance in order to fully develop its rich potential.

