



REEF Youth Encounters

25 -27 July Helseban Valley, GraneroVerde, Kobayat

A Special Edition: Highlighting a New Generation of Environmental Advocates

Beirut, Lebanon – 8 July 2025 – REEF Association announces a special edition of its annual Encounters dedicated to its work on youth engagement and advocacy. Now in its 7th year, this edition follows a nine-month mentorship program with a cohort of 20 youth aged 13 to 18, developed under REEF’s “REEF Ambassadors” initiative. Launched in October 2024 after two successful short summer sessions, the program brought together participants from Akkar and displaced communities amidst the war, who eventually went back to their villages at the end of the war. The Akkari core group engaged in awareness sessions, nature activities, artistic workshops (theater, story writing and film animation), to finally conceive creative works.

From 25 to 27 July, their journey will culminate in **REEF Youth Encounters**, a three-day public gathering in the heart of Helseban Valley in Kobayat. This special edition will bring together the ambassadors, their families and friends, as well as community members of all ages from across Akkar and beyond. Through a rich program of shared learning, intergenerational dialogue, outdoor activities, film screenings, hands-on workshops, and youth-driven environmental storytelling, the event will highlight the growth and accomplishments of this new generation of advocates.

Beyond these Encounters, the ambassadors will continue to act as peer educators, leading environmental initiatives in schools and villages, ensuring their invaluable work extends into the wider community.

An intergenerational program of activities and performances

- On Friday, 25 July, after the opening, **a live storytelling session, *The Book of Nature***, presented by a storyteller, will unveil a few short stories created by the REEF Ambassadors, under the guidance of environmentalist Antoine Daher, exploring themes of forests, wildlife, and ecological balance.

- The evening will continue with the **Lebanon premiere of "Vivre avec les loups" (Living with Wolves) by Jean-Michel Bertrand**, exploring the fascinating world of wolves and their co-existence with humans. The evening will end with a **Star Gazing Tour** to experience Akkar's clear night sky from the heights of Chambouk.
- **Saturday evening will host a screening of the Ambassadors' three creative audiovisual projects**, followed by discussions with the audience. These projects explore diverse themes related to nature, local wildlife, and reimagined folklore, offering unique perspectives on Lebanon's natural world and cultural narratives. From an eco-comedy about the Juniper Tree to a deep dive into the misunderstood striped hyena and an animated re-telling of a classic fairy tale on wolves, these productions, directed by the Ambassadors with their mentors, each offer a distinct storytelling approach.
- The 26th evening will culminate in a musical and dancing night inspired by the African Rhythm , featuring Iqaa el Dounia band with Youmna Marwa and Marylise Aad, Jad Awada, and Malek Fleifel.
- Two hands-on workshops will be held throughout this edition. On Friday, the "African Rhythms Drumming Workshop," led by Iqaa' Al Dunya, will introduce participants (ages 9 to 99) to rhythm and collective expression. On Saturday, the "Pottery Workshop (Hearth)" will offer participants the chance to learn about soil composition, sustainable sourcing, and how to shape and mold pots. Advance registration is required as places are limited.
- The program includes two daytime hiking activities to explore Akkar's natural and cultural heritage, accessible through prior registration :
 - **Saturday morning : Basalt Day** is a cultural journey to discover Akkar's black stone through geology, art, and heritage architecture. The tour includes visits to El-Bireh Saray, the Roman Temple of Nemesis in Menjez, a meeting with the Daoud brothers and their black stone sculptures, Mar Daniel Church, and old basalt-built houses.
 - **Sunday morning : Karst Landscapes Hike in Qammouaa**, a 9 km moderate-level hike through naturally-sculpted limestone formations, fir and cedar forests, ending at Wadi el-Ballat and the Nabi Khaled site.
- On Friday and Saturday, visitors can also explore **a local food and crafts market** featuring regional specialties, *mouneh*, and artisanal products that support local communities.
- REEF is also pursuing its "zero waste" policy with a focus this year on plastic. **A plastic bottle collection competition**, held in collaboration with CIRCL will run until 25 July under the theme "Reduce Plastic, One Bottle at a Time." Participants must collect a minimum of 6,000 empty, compressed bottles. Winners will be announced during the REEF Youth Encounters.

Full program on www.reefassociation.org Instagram & Facebook: @reef.association

All activities are free. Registrations for workshops, plastic competition, star gazing, Basalt Day and Karst Landscapes : 81 073 756.

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