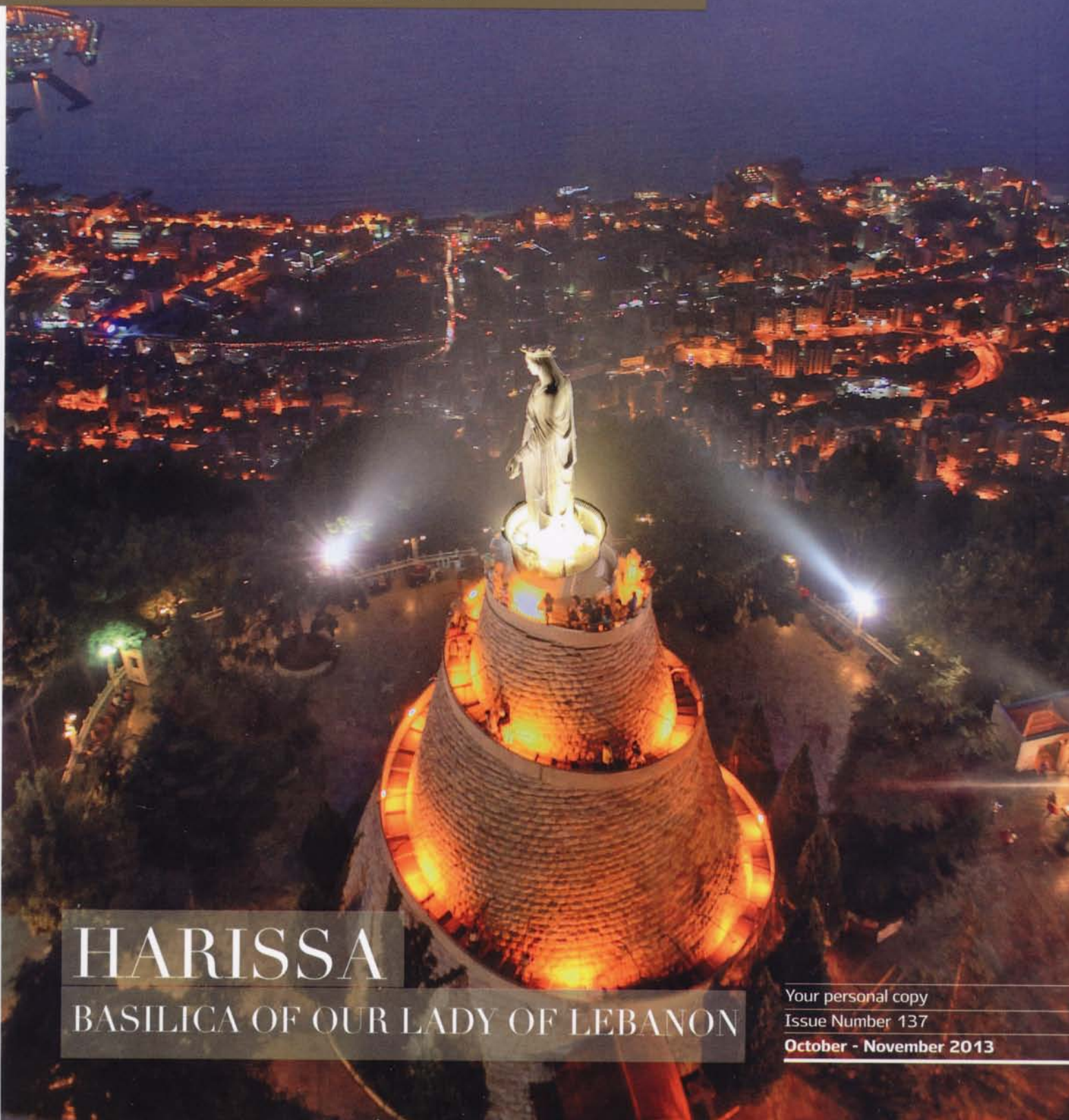


# CEDAR WINGS

The In-flight Magazine of Middle East Airlines - AirLiban



## HARISSA

### BASILICA OF OUR LADY OF LEBANON

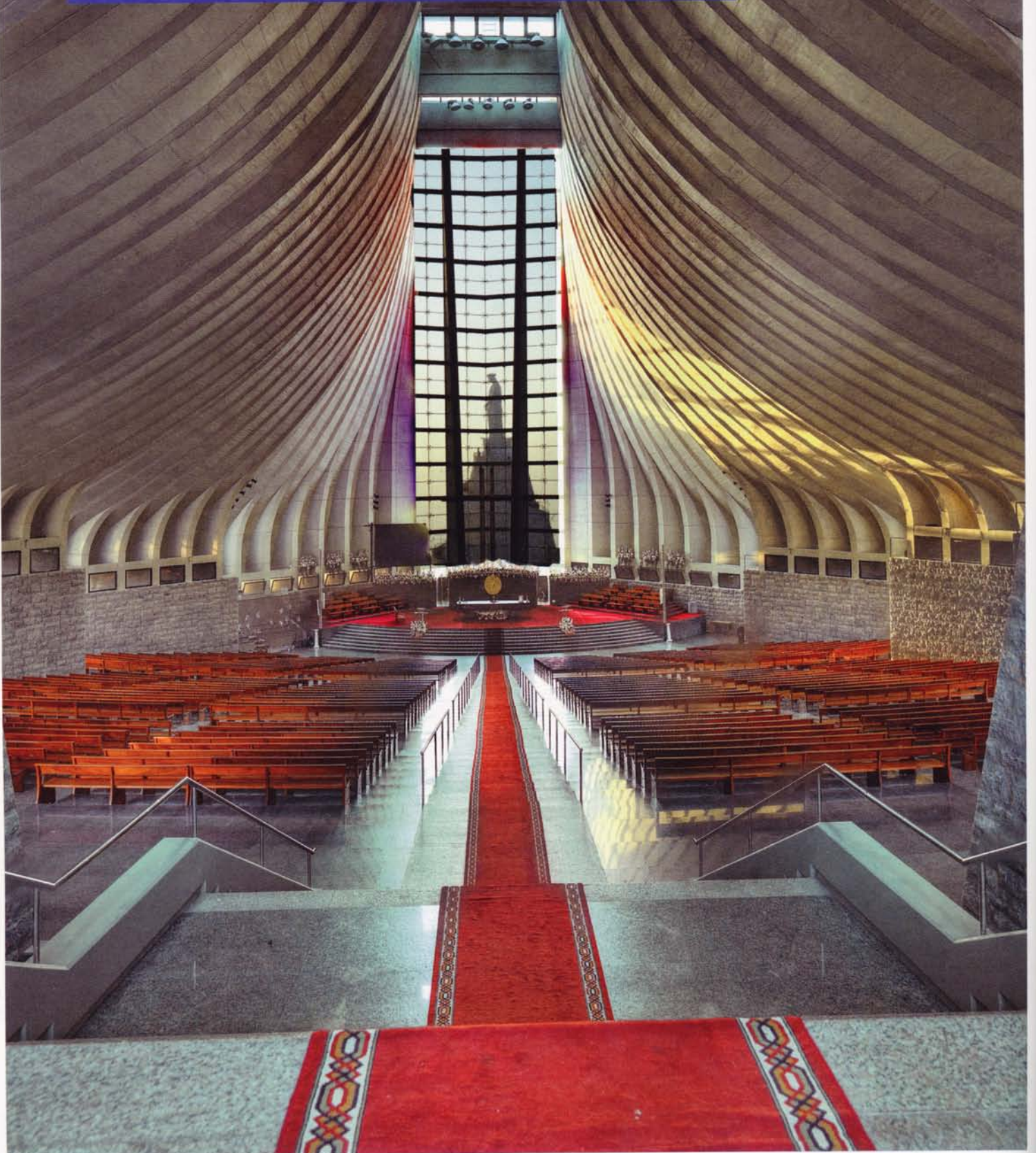
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# HARISSA

Our Lady of Lebanon on a Hilltop



When driving along the Kesrouan main road to Jounieh bay, the coastal line seems conquered by buildings and the hills overlooking the city look swallowed by the cement invasion. But when we see the white statue of Virgin Mary on the green hilltop, we know that serenity is there.

The way to Harissa is not long. From Charles Helou Stadium in Jounieh, the road follows a smooth course through Bkerké, Seat of the Maronite Patriarch then Daroun-Harissa. Visitors come from all over Lebanon and the world to the sanctuary. They light a candle, burn the incense, bow before the Virgin and attend the masses. Most of the one million and five hundred thousand visitors are pilgrims seeking spiritual counseling, healing and confession. Some express their faith fervor by walking inside the sanctuary barefoot and even climbing to the statue of Mary, the Lady of Lebanon, on their knees.

Harissa is in the heart of Lebanon. In 1904 the construction of the chapel was launched and given the name of Our Lady of Lebanon. It was the 50th anniversary of the Immaculate Conception. Since its inauguration in 1908, the sanctuary became a national pilgrimage destination for the Lebanese. Inside the chapel, a statue dedicated to Our Lady of the Light was installed. It was sculpted by Lebanon's famous artist Youssef el Howayek in 1954 for the occasion of the Marial Year. During six months of that year, the statue was carried in procession to 426 villages across Lebanon.

The 8.5 meter tall white statue of the Virgin offers a splendid vision from its towering location. As it stands on the chapel, the statue can be seen from afar. It overlooks the Mediterranean and mountains. The panoramic view it offers is one of the most beautiful in Lebanon. Pilgrims ascend the 104 steps of the spiral staircase to reach the statue. The climb could be challenging for many. But they are led by a spiritual fervor, a vow and the determination to be close to Mary and probably to touch the sky. Spectacular scenery is within close reach. Tourists are attracted as well to admire the amazing panoramic view of Jounieh Bay and Beirut in the distance. A cable car locally called "Téléférique" carries them to the site.

Opposite Page:  
Inside the Basilica:  
The nave carries worshipers to the Holy Mother

Below:  
At night the Basilica takes the colors of purity of Our Lady of Lebanon

