
Travel Guide Jeddah

02 Quick view
02 Saudi Arabia
03 Travel etiquette
04 Health

05 Phone calls & Internet
05 Top 10 sights
07 Shopping in Jeddah
08 Restaurants

08 Nightlife
09 Calendar of events
11 Hotels





Quick view

Jeddah – a brief overview

Saudi Arabia's commercial hub, the ancient trading port of Jeddah sits on the southern coast and dominates Red Sea trade – just as it did in centuries past. More open and less conservative than the capital Riyadh, the city boasts a beautiful waterfront corniche as well as a collection of ancient coral fishermen's cottages, albeit in varying states of disrepair. Like other cities in the region, the centre is dominated by glass-and-steel skyscrapers, while endless identikit malls are dotted all over the city.

Nevertheless, with its thriving wharves and bustling souks, modern Jeddah hasn't strayed too far from its mercantile past – and exploring the city's fascinating side streets and maze-like markets is a real pleasure.



Saudi Arabia

General Information

Country overview

No other country in the world is as misunderstood as the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and perhaps no other country – rich with culture, heritage, and natural beauty – is as worthy of a first visit.

The German Foreign Office, das Auswärtige Amt, publishes regularly updated general and country-specific travel information on its website ([auswaertiges-amt.de](https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de)). Here, you will also find safety advice and information about particular risks and travel warnings, in other words, the department's urgent appeals not to travel to a country or a certain region of a country at all if it can be avoided.

Geography

Saudi Arabia occupies four-fifths of the Arabian peninsula. It is bordered to the northwest by Jordan, to the north by Iraq and Kuwait, to the east by the Gulf of Oman, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and Oman, and to the south by Yemen. To the west lies the Red Sea. Along the Red Sea coast is a narrow coastal strip (*Tihama*) which becomes relatively hotter and more humid towards the south and has areas of extensive tidal flats and lava fields.

Behind this coastal plain is a series of plateaux reaching up to 2,000m (6,560ft).

The southern part of this range, *Asir*, has some peaks of over 3,000m (9,840ft). North of these mountains, in the far north, is *An Nafud*, a sand sea, and further south the landscape rises to *Najd*, a semi-desert area scattered with oases. Still further south the land falls away, levelling out to unremitting desert, the uninhabited 'Empty Quarter' or *Rub al Khali*. Along the Gulf coast is a low fertile plain giving way to limestone ridges inland.

General knowledge

Key facts

Population: 26939583

Population Density (per sq km): 12

Capital: Riyadh.

Language

Arabic. English is spoken in business circles.

Currency

Saudi Arabian Riyal (SAR) = 100 halala; 5 halala = 20 qurush. Notes are in denominations of SAR500, 100, 50, 10, 5 and 1. Coins are in denominations of 50, 25, 10, and 5 halala.

Electricity

127/220 volts AC (with plans to change completely to 220 volts), 60Hz. Flat and round two-pin plugs and British-style square three-pin plugs are used.

General business opening hours

Sun-Thurs 0800-1200 and 1500-1800 (Ramadan 2000-0100), Fri 0800-1200, with some regional variation.

Government office hours

Sun-Thurs 0730-1430.

Public holidays

Listed below are the public holidays for the period January 2020 to December 2021.

Note

Muslim festivals are timed according to local sightings of various phases of the moon and the dates given below are approximations. During the lunar month of Ramadan that precedes Eid al-Fitr, Muslims fast during the day and feast at night and normal business patterns may be interrupted. Some disruption may continue into Eid al-Fitr itself. Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha may last up to several days, depending on the region.

2020

Eid al-Fitr (End of Ramadan): 24 to 27 May 2020

Eid al-Adha (Feast of Sacrifice): 31 July to 3 August 2020

Al-Eid Al-Watany (National Day): 23 September 2020

2021

Eid al-Fitr (End of Ramadan): 13 to 16 May 2021

Eid al-Adha (Feast of Sacrifice): 20 to 22 July 2021

Al-Eid Al-Watany (National Day): 23 September 2021

All information subject to change.

**Travel etiquette**
How to fit in**Social Conventions**

Saudi culture is based on Islam and the perfection of the Arabic language. The Saudi form of Islam is conservative and fundamentalist, based on the 18th-century revivalist movement of the Najdi leader Sheikh Muhammad Ibn Abdel-Wahhab. This has had a great effect on Saudi society, especially on the position of women, who are required by law to leave the home covered in abaya, (black robes). Some women also wear a niqab, a black mask that covers the face, and gloves, though there are regional variations of dress. The Najd and other remote areas remain true

to Wahhabi tradition, but throughout the country this way of life is being altered by modernisation and rapid development.

Shaking hands and kissing on the cheek is the customary form of greeting between men. Invitations to private homes are unusual, though not unheard of. Entertaining is usually in hotels or restaurants and although the custom of eating with the right hand persists, it is more likely that knives and forks will be used. A small gift either promoting the company or representing your country will generally be well received.

Women are expected to dress modestly and it is best to do so to avoid offence.

Men should not wear shorts in public or go without a shirt. The norms for public behaviour are extremely conservative and religious police, known as *muttawa*, are charged with enforcing these standards.

Customs regarding smoking are the same as in Europe and non-smoking areas are indicated. During Ramadan, Muslims are not allowed to eat, smoke or drink during the day and it is illegal for a foreign visitor to do so in public.

Photography

Strictly speaking, photography is not permitted. However, many people do still take photos, but are careful to ask permission of the relevant authority before photographing people or any building. In recent years, the spread of small digital cameras and mobile phones with cameras have eased official and unofficial acceptance of photography.



Health Health

Food & Drink

All water from the tap should be regarded as being potentially contaminated. Water used for drinking, brushing teeth or making ice should have first been boiled or otherwise sterilised. Bottled water is cheap and safe. Fresh milk is pasteurised but powdered or boxed milk is also available as an alternative. Avoid dairy products which are likely to have been made from unboiled milk. Only eat well-cooked meat and fish. Vegetables should be washed and fruit peeled.

Other Risks

Avoid swimming and paddling in fresh water; swimming pools which are well chlorinated and maintained are safe.

Contractual physician of Lufthansa

Abdulrahim Dr. Bai
Najd Building
Tahlia Street/Service Road
Gari Medical Center
P.O. Box 10744
Jeddah 21443
Saudi-Arabia
Tel. +966-12-2632099

Please note that Lufthansa accepts no responsibility for the treatment nor will it bear the cost of any treatment.

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Phone calls & Internet

Phone calls & Internet

Telephone/Mobile Telephone

Dialing code: +966

Telephone

A sophisticated telecommunications network and satellite, microwave and cable systems span the country.

Mobile Telephone

Visitors can apply for a mobile telephone number upon arrival at the airport. Prepaid SIM cards, which operate in most handheld devices, are affordable and reliable.

International roaming agreements exist with some mobile phone companies and coverage is mostly good.

Hotels and some long-term apartment rentals will include access to a landline, but local and international calls can be much more expensive than calls placed on a landline.

Internet

The Ministry of Post, Telegraph and Telephones provides internet facilities in most cities. But email can also be accessed from many hotels and internet cafes.



Top 10 sights

Top 10 sights in Jeddah

Naseef House

This beautiful old coral house was built in 1872 and is one of several in old Jeddah, although easily one of the best preserved. Originally constructed for a wealthy local merchant, it is now a tiny museum and has a lovely rooftop terrace.

Souq al-Alawi
Jeddah
Saudi Arabia
Tel.: +966 2 647 2280

Opening times:
Daily 1700-2100

Khuzam Palace

Built in 1932 for King Abdulaziz (and designed by Muhammed bin Laden), the vast

Khuzam Palace is now a museum with exhibits covering everything from Stone Age cooking implements to al-Saud royal possessions.

Al-Nuzlah
Jeddah
Saudi Arabia

Opening times:
Various

King's Fountain

Shooting 255m into the air, the King's Fountain dominates the Corniche from out at sea. Particularly beautiful at night, when it is illuminated.

Corniche Street
Jeddah
Saudi Arabia

Al-Tayibat City Museum for International Civilisation

A really lovely little museum covering four floors of an old house in central Jeddah, the Al-Tayibat includes everything from ancient coins to beautifully illuminated Islamic manuscripts.

Rayhanat al-Jazirah St
Jeddah
Saudi Arabia

Opening times:
Sat-Thu 0800-1200 and 1700-2100

Balad

One of the oldest parts of Jeddah, Balad is a warren of winding streets, souks and pretty old mosques as well as the Merchant's House – an old coral house that was once home to Lawrence of Arabia.

Balad
Jeddah
Saudi Arabia

Jeddah Corniche

Stretching 35km from the Gulf of Salaman to Jeddah Islamic Port, the Corniche wends its way past city beaches and luxury hotels as well as more than a few gorgeous old coral homes.

Corniche
Jeddah
Saudi Arabia

Makkah Gate

Surrounded by old mosques, the historic Makkah Gate is also close to the Bedouin Souq, so named for its high proportion of former nomads among stallholders and wonderful handmade crafts.

Old Makkah Road
Jeddah
Saudi Arabia

Red Sea

Like the better known Egyptian resorts, Jeddah's waters are home to an embarrassment of riches, including coral reefs and scores of tropical fish. Desert Sea Diving is the oldest and best known of the diving companies, although there are plenty to choose from.

North Obhur, Obhur Road www.desertseadivers.com
Jeddah
Saudi Arabia

Floating Mosque

Despite the nickname, the Fatimah Azzahra Mosque is actually built on a floating platform. Nevertheless, it is one of the prettiest sights in Jeddah and easily accessed via the Corniche.

Corniche Opening times:
Jeddah Various
Saudi Arabia

Souq al-Alawi

Jeddah's biggest souk is also one of its oldest and is home to a warren of fascinating stalls selling just about everything imaginable, including local crafts.

Al-Dahab St Opening times:
Jeddah Sat-Wed 0800-1300 and 1700-2100
Saudi Arabia



Shopping in Jeddah

Key Areas

Despite recent modernisation, Jeddah hasn't lost sight of its mercantile roots, and commerce continues to dominate the city. Much of the action now happens in the city's many malls which are numerous and specialise in designer goods and international high-street fashion. Nevertheless, there are plenty of street markets and souks, most of which are located in old Jeddah and Balad. Foremost among them is Souq al-Alawi where you can browse everything from exotic spices to leather slippers and even blocks of gold.

Markets

Souq al-Nada in Balad is the main place for gold and silver jewellery while Souq al-Jamia specialises in silk and other textiles. Souq al-Alawi is the largest and sells just about everything imaginable.

Shopping Centres

Jeddah has scores of malls, the largest and most impressive of which is Mall of Arabia (An Nuzhah). Other good bets include the Heraa International Mall (Al Madinah Al Munawara Road) and Star's Avenue (King Abdul Aziz Road), which has a branch of Saks Fifth Avenue.



Restaurants

Restaurants in Jeddah

Thanks to its seaside location, the fresh fish served up by Jeddah's restaurants is second to none. Although there are plenty of Saudi dining spots, many more serve up European fare as well as cuisine from the rest of the Middle East.

Green Island

The fresh seafood is lovely, but the real draw is the location: a series of glass-bottomed chalets in the sea off the Corniche.

Ash Shati
Jeddah
Saudi Arabia

Price: Expensive

Aromi

A seriously good Italian in one of Jeddah's most luxurious hotels.

North Corniche Rd
Jeddah
Saudi Arabia

Price: Expensive

Al Nakheel

Hugely popular with the locals, this is a great place to get a taste of Saudi cuisine.

8109 Al Kurnaysh Rd
Al Shaty
Jeddah
Saudi Arabia

Price: Moderate

Yildizlar

Really good Turkish food served up in a setting that looks like something from *Arabian Nights*.

Al Maadi, Al Hamra
Jeddah
Saudi Arabia

Price: Moderate

Semson Jeddah

Lovely little Lebanese restaurant specialising in big tasty portions and low prices.

Al Amir Sultan, Al Khalidiyah
Jeddah
Saudi Arabia

Price: Cheap



Nightlife

Nightlife in Jeddah

Like Riyadh, Jeddah has little in the way of Western-style nightlife thanks to Saudi

Arabia's blanket ban on alcohol and discos. Nevertheless, the city has plenty of shisha cafés and coffee bars as well as a comedy club.

Jeddah Comedy Club

Most of the performances are in Arabic, but it's worth going along for the atmosphere alone.

Corniche Road
Jeddah
Saudi Arabia

The Lounge

Serving up coffee, tea and non-alcoholic cocktails, this bar boasts lovely Red Sea views.

Al Hamra'a Dist.
Park Hyatt Hotel
Jeddah
Saudi Arabia

Layla's Gourmet

Tucked away in a suburban villa, this little café looks as if it could be in Paris.

Villa 50
Tahliya Area
Jeddah
Saudi Arabia

Caffe Aroma

One of the best places to try a water pipe, this shisha café is for adults only.

Al Mansurah, Al Ham'mra
Al Hamraa Commercial Center
Jeddah
Saudi Arabia

Kalila Bakery and Café

A cosy little café serving up really good coffee and some of the best cakes in Jeddah.

The Courtyard, Prince Sultan St. & Al-Rawdah St. intersection
Jeddah
Saudi Arabia



Calendar of events Calendar of events

Saudi International Weddings Fair

Brides and their families plan the day of their dreams at this one-stop shop for wedding planning, with fabulous cakes, designer dresses and extravagant floral arrangements vying for their attention. According to the organisers, the Gulf bridal market is worth around a whopping US\$750 million in jewellery alone.

March 5 - 7, 2020

Venue: Jeddah Hilton

Jeddah Economic Forum

Business leaders, economists and heads of state from around the world meet at this important forum, dubbed the 'Davos of the Middle East'. Discussions on growth, job creation and economic diversity and sustainability dominate the event, with big-name keynote speakers providing expertise.

May 2020

Venue: Jeddah Hilton

Eid al-Fitr

Families and friends gather at home, in restaurants, at the beach and in parks during this religious holiday marking the end of Ramadan. In the evening, the Corniche turns into a massive party zone, heaving with celebrating crowds and cruising cars. There are usually fireworks and a fun, festive atmosphere.

May 23 - 24, 2020

Venue: Throughout Jeddah

Jeddah Ghair (Jeddah Summer Festival)

One of Saudi Arabia's biggest events, this summer festival is packed with concerts, sporting events (from water polo to roller skating), stand-up comedy, kids' activities and theatrical performances. Festivities take place in malls, parks, squares and tourist sites throughout the city, with twice-weekly fireworks displays on the Jeddah Corniche.

June - July 2020

Venue: Various venues

Eid al-Adha

Muslims in Jeddah and throughout Saudi Arabia traditionally slaughter an animal and enjoy a feast with their families on this religious holiday. It's also a time for prayer and giving, with people offering food, money and clothing to those who are less well off.

July 30 - August 3, 2020

Venue: Throughout Jeddah

Saudi National Day

Each year on 23 September, Saudis commemorate the unification of the kingdom with a public holiday. In Jeddah, locals dress up in green, pile into their cars and drive along the Corniche, hooting their horns, singing, shouting and waving flags.

A fireworks display over the water rounds the day off.

September 23, 2020

Venue: Throughout Jeddah

Jeddah International Trade Fair

An incredible variety of industries show off their latest goods at this massive trade fair. From swanky swimming pools and state-of-the-art kitchens to stylish Arabian textiles and flashy jewellery, there's an astonishing array of products on display. National pavilions represent countries from Asia, Africa and Europe.

November 2020

Venue: Jeddah Centre for Forums and Events

Foodex Saudi

Restaurateurs, buyers and foodies mingle at this gastronomic event, the largest in Saudi Arabia. Visitors can nibble samples of Saudi and international cuisine, learn how to cook a five-star meal at home, discover new brands and watch entertaining cookery demos and competitions.

November 2020

Venue: Jeddah Centre for Forums and Events

Decofair

Over 10,000 visitors check out the newest Saudi Arabian and international interior design trends at Decofair. Furniture, furnishings, lighting, textiles and accessories are all on display. Top design professionals lead educational seminars and workshops, and visitors can pick up the latest products.

November 18 - 20, 2020

Venue: Al Faisaliah Hotel, Riad

Saudi International Motor Show

Flashy cars are all the rage in Saudi Arabia, and Jeddah's annual car show is heaven for motor fanatics. The shiniest new models of cars, SUVs and motorbikes are all on show, with major banks on hand to provide immediate financing to eager buyers.

December 2020

Venue: Jeddah Centre for Forums and Events



Hotels Hotels in Jeddah

Unlike Riyadh, most of Jeddah's hotels are designed for recreation, so expect huge swimming pools as standard as well as lavish decoration. Budget hotels are virtually non-existent however, so be prepared to pay well for your stay.

Al-Basmah Coral Resort

Set in beautiful gardens, Al-Basmah doesn't do rooms – it's all vast suites and villas.

Mohammadia Area, Abhor Category: Expensive
Jeddah
Saudi-Arabia

Qasr al Sharq

Decked out like a sultan's palace, Qasr al Sharq is one of Jeddah's most lavish hotels.

Al Kurnaysh Rd, Ash Shati Category: Expensive
North Corniche Road
Jeddah
Saudi-Arabia

Hotel Al Hamra

White walls and wooden fittings contribute to the Al Hamra's pleasantly airy feel.

Palestine street Category: Moderate
Jeddah
Saudi-Arabia

Jeddah Marriott

The décor here is standard modern corporate, but the hotel offers a warm welcome.

Palestine Rd. Corner PR Fahad Street Category: Moderate
Jeddah
Saudi-Arabia

Crowne Plaza Jeddah

The interior needs updating, but the Corniche location is unbeatable.

Al Corniche- Al Ma'adi Road Category: Cheap
Jeddah
Saudi-Arabia