

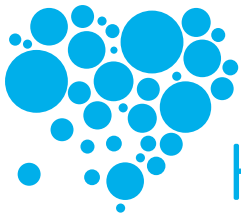
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Doctors' Guide to Working & Living in the Gulf



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Head Medical

Healthcare

What opportunities are there?

Registration & Immigration

Cultural Awareness / Etiquette



QATAR

Education

Healthcare

Cost of Living

Transport

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

Education

Healthcare

Cost of Living

Transport

KUWAIT

Education

Healthcare

Cost of Living

Transport

SAUDI ARABIA

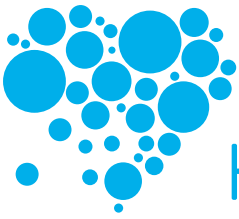
Education

Healthcare

Cost of Living

Transport

Contact Us



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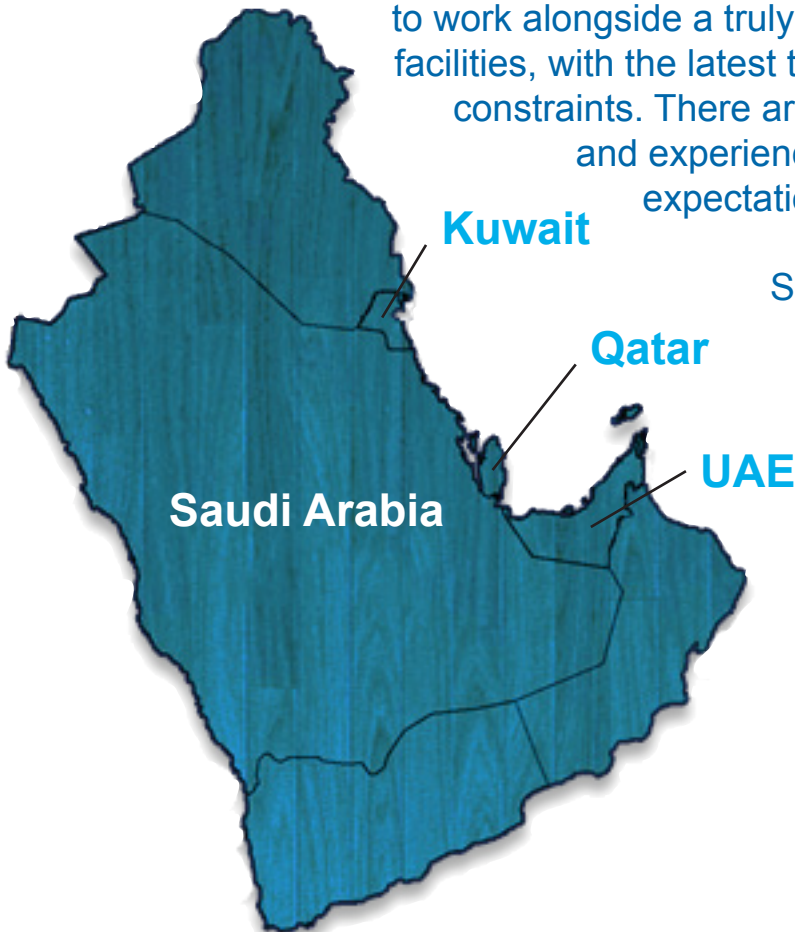
Healthcare

Healthcare is regarded as one of the fastest growing sectors in the Middle East. Healthcare spend in the GCC in 2011 was estimated to be \$46.12bn and this is expected to reach \$133.19bn in 2018, due to a rising population, an increase in lifestyle diseases and deeper insurance penetration.

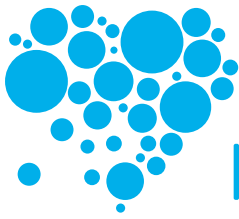
There are numerous high profile healthcare projects being built across the region, both by governments and by private foreign healthcare investors, with big names like Cleveland Clinic and King's College London, joining companies already established in the market, including Johns Hopkins, Imperial College London, Cornell University and Moorfield's.



Whether working within a Government or a private hospital, Doctors moving to the Gulf region will have the opportunity to work alongside a truly global workforce in state of the art facilities, with the latest technologies and without budgetary constraints. There are also opportunities to bring new skills and experience to the market, shaping healthcare expectations in this fast developing region.



Standards are remarkably high for such a fast developing sector, with the majority of hospitals JCI Accredited, or at least working towards JCI Accreditation. The Middle East has changed enormously over the last 50 years and continues to do so. The healthcare sector is integral to the regions continuing growth and development, and the investment being made clearly reflects this.



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What opportunities are there?

The majority of opportunities in the Gulf are at Consultant level, working in hospitals or specialist clinics, both government and private. The qualifications and experience needed to practise as a Consultant depends on where you did your training. If specialist training was done in the UK (a Tier 1 country) you need to have 2 years post-CCT experience to work as a Consultant. Tier 2 countries require 8 years' experience post specialisation.

Due to the Middle Eastern culture of self-referral there has been a lack of opportunities for GPs, but this is starting to change. The Ministries of Health in Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the UAE have all put policies in place to massively increase their primary healthcare offerings, which should see a growth in opportunities for overseas GPs in the near future.

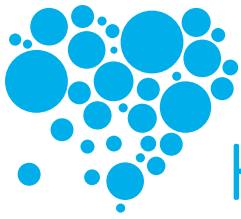
Unfortunately there are no real opportunities for Junior Doctors to go to the Gulf. There are only a few training hospitals and they are focussed on training local physicians, not offering places for overseas graduates. Also, Consultant-led care is the norm across the region, further limiting opportunities.

Registration & Immigration

The process of obtaining medical registration in the Gulf will vary depending on the country you decide to work in (and in the UAE, the emirate you are employed in will also affect the process). Gaining licensure will involve a number of steps that may involve assessments, background checks, certificates of good standing and a required number of years of practise depending on your specialisation. Generally speaking, you must hold a medical qualification listed from a medical school listed in the International Medical Education Directory of the Foundation for Advancement of International Medical Education and Research.

Similarly, visa application processes vary by country, but generally speaking once a job offer has been made the prospective employer will play a large part in helping you obtain the relevant employment / residence visa. For further information it is





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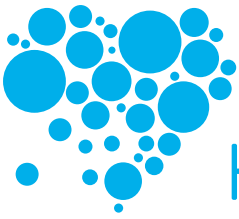
best to contact your Head Medical Recruitment Advisor who will be able to provide you with details relevant to your desired location. The links below also provide useful guidance on some of the requirements stipulated by the different countries in the Gulf region:

[Qatar Supreme Council of Health](#)
[UAE Ministry of Health](#)
[Saudi Arabia Ministry of Health](#)
[Kuwait Ministry of Health](#)

Cultural Awareness / Etiquette

Although the Middle East is a large expanse of geography with a variety of countries and customs, noting the following general points of etiquette can be useful when dealing with people who have been raised according to the traditions of the Middle East:

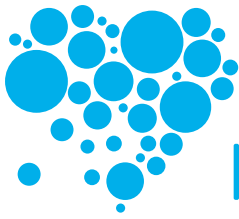
- It is best to avoid discussions about religion and the politics of the Middle East. Always bear in mind that you are expected to behave in a way that fits in with your fellow residents.
- As a general rule, women's clothing should cover the tops of the arms and legs. Anything that is revealing should be kept to the privacy of your home.
- Public displays of affection between people of the opposite gender, including married couples, are generally frowned upon. This can include activities as minor as hand-holding.
- Displaying the sole of one's foot or touching somebody with one's shoe is often considered rude. This includes sitting with one's feet or foot elevated. In some circumstances, shoes should be removed before entering a living room.



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- Many in the Middle East do not separate professional and personal life. Doing business revolves much more around personal relationships, family ties, trust and honor. There is a tendency to prioritize personal matters above all else. It is therefore crucial that business relationships are built on mutual friendship and trust.
- Muslims are obliged to pray five times a day, therefore daily routines, appointments and meetings must be fitted in appropriately around prayer times. Friday is the day for congregational prayers and it is obligatory for all males to attend.
- The traditional Islamic greeting you will hear is 'Asalamu alaykum' (peace be with you). As a non-Muslim you would not be expected to use it, but if you did you would receive the reply 'wa alaykum salam' (and peace be with you).
- The roles of men and women are far more defined in the Arab culture and interaction between the sexes is still frowned upon in certain arenas. If you are introduced to a woman as a male, it is advisable to wait and see if a hand is extended. If it is not, then do not try to shake hands. Avoid touching and prolonged eye contact with women.
- Never refuse refreshments offered, as this will be taken as an insult to your host. Once you have received your refreshment, you may however just take a sip and leave the rest in the glass or cup. Generally speaking, sweet black tea with fresh mint, small glasses of fragrant coffee, fruit juice or water will be offered.





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- You will be expected to remove your shoes on entering a private residence so it is important to ensure you have clean feet or wear respectable socks. If you are invited for a meal in a private home that is eaten at floor level, remember to sit so that the soles of your feet do not face anyone. Only take food with your right hand. Do not explicitly admire anything belonging to your host. Your host would then be honour bound to make you a gift of the item, and would in turn expect a gift of the same stature in return at a later stage.

The points above are by no means a fully exhaustive list of do's and don't's for the Gulf region, and more research should be undertaken once you are aware of where exactly it is that you will be working.

Qatar

Population: 1.85 Million

Capital: Doha

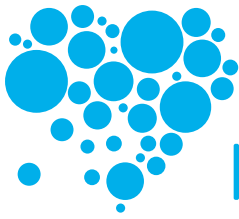
Area: 11,437 sq. km

Official Language: Arabic

Currency: 1 Riyal = 100 dirhams



Qatar, a former pearl-fishing centre, is now one of the richest countries in the Gulf region. Thanks to the exploitation of large oil and gas fields, rapid expansion has led to economic diversification and the development of an all-embracing welfare state, with many services being free or heavily subsidised. Possessing more than 15% of the world's proven gas reserves, Qatar has ambitions to become a global energy giant, and is also home to the Sidra Medical and Research Centre, a facility devoted to the specialist care of paediatric and high-risk obstetric patients which is due to open in 2015.



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Qatar has plenty to offer in terms of lifestyle as well as career opportunities. From natural attractions such as the inland sea Khor al-Adaid and its surrounding desert, to cultural and historical heritage sites in and around the capital Doha, including the Museum of Islamic Art, the historic fishing port, the old markets and Doha's beautiful waterfront – the Corniche.

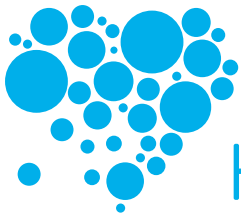
The annual Book Fair and the Tribeca Film Festival are further highlights in Doha's cultural diary. Qatar has been selected to host the 2022 FIFA World Cup, and will be the first country in the Middle East to do so. There are also a plethora of shopping options in Doha, from traditional souks (markets) to modern air-conditioned malls.

Education

Qatar has numerous schools and is able to cater for local and most foreign national needs, with the Ministry of Education and the Supreme Education Council jointly controlling the education system. There are 185 private schools within Qatar of which 24 belong to foreign communities and are overseen by the embassies of those countries. International and private schools are popular among expatriates, with curriculums including International, British, American and French.

Most schools have a waiting list so it's best to contact the schools well in advance, and schools accept students at any time of the year depending on place availability. It is advisable to register for a place as soon as you can before arriving in Qatar, as school classes are limited to 30 children per class by law. Many schools here accept applications a year in advance from when you want to start and also require students to complete an entrance exam as well as provide reports and results from previous schools.





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Most schools here for expatriate children are Private, so fees are usually met by either the employer or the parents. The fees for schools increase depending on the level of education provided, so by the end of secondary level they will be higher than primary. The school year is split into three terms and fees are paid at the start of each term.

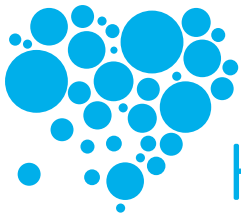
Healthcare

Health insurance is normally organised by employers, and the standard of care in Qatar is excellent. If health insurance is not included in your payment package, then highly subsidised health and dental care with Hamad Medical Corporation can be accessed with the purchase of a Hamad Card (100 QAR). Since the country opened its first hospital 50 years ago, many changes and improvements have been introduced. The healthcare system is available to all, whether you are a national, an expatriate, or a tourist.

Cost of Living

Employment packages for expats are usually quite lucrative and are one of the main draws for those who choose to relocate to the country. The population of Qatar continues to grow, and many people find that a move here provides them with the opportunity to further develop their career, and also allows them to make and save a fair amount of money.

Accommodation costs will form the bulk of an expat's expenditure, roughly 30–40% of a monthly salary. As with any other country, the price of rent will be dictated by the type of property and its location. Many expats moving to Qatar will be based in its largest city, Doha, and people tend to choose which area they live in according to availability and proximity to work or their children's school. All areas of Doha have their pros and cons according to personal tastes, but there are no 'bad' sections of town.



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In Qatar, a housing allowance will most likely be part of the expat's salary, and is usually paid in monthly installments. Rental costs will also vary depending on whether the accommodation is furnished or unfurnished, and it never hurts to try and negotiate a lower price.

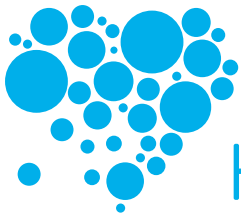
Utilities are reasonably priced, but it is good to be aware of small extra accommodation costs that may add up. Some apartments have yearly maintenance/service fees attached, and expats need to know if payment is the responsibility of the tenant or the landlord.

Transport

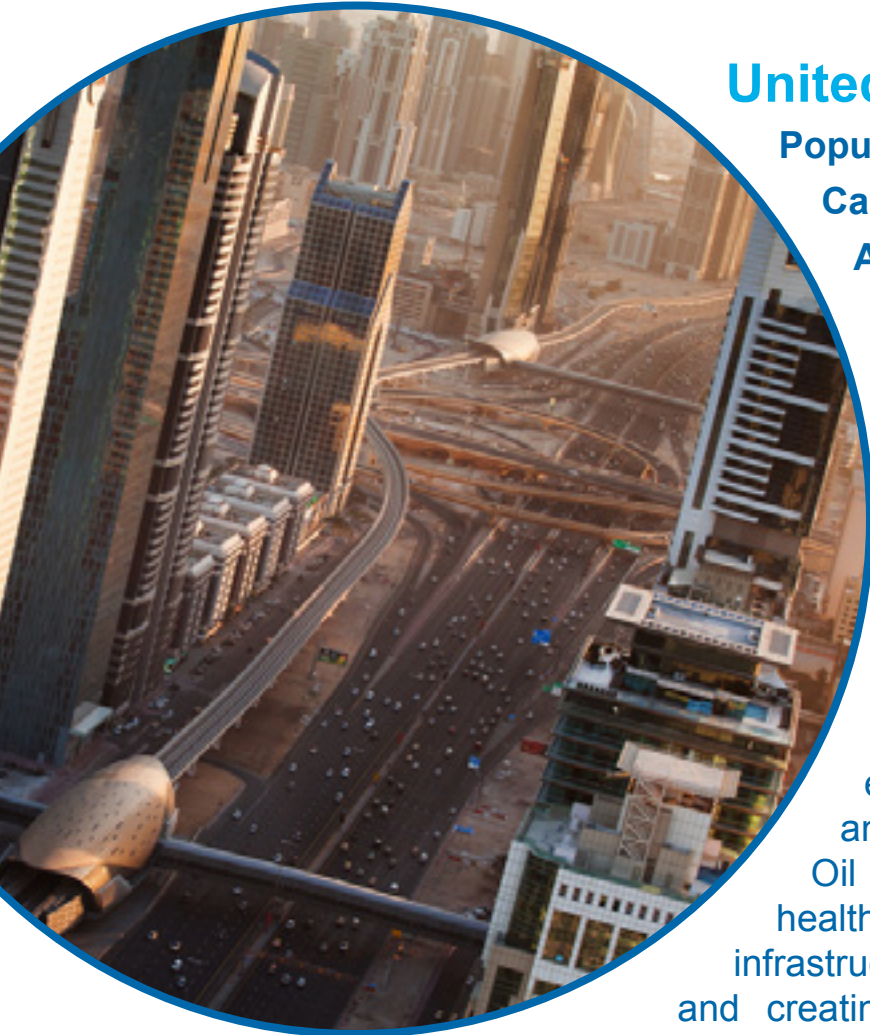
Both renting and buying a car are viable options in Qatar. There are plenty of rental companies, many of which offer better rates the longer the lease period. A small car, such as a Nissan Sunny, will cost around 3,000 QAR per month, while a larger four-wheel drive vehicle will cost at least 5,000 QAR a month.

The public transport system of Qatar consists of buses and taxis, and is run by a single company, Karwa. Both modes of transit are good value, taxi fares start at 4 QAR and increase by around 2.20 QAR per km (more in the evening), while bus fares start at 3 QAR. Buses only run the main routes of Doha, and taxis can usually be found in a handful of ranks around the city or in shopping centre car parks.





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United Arab Emirates

Population: 4.7 million

Capital: Abu Dhabi

Area: 77,700 sq km (30,000 sq miles)

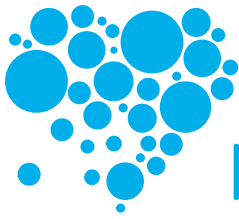
Official language: Arabic

Currency: 1 Dirham = 100 fils

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) is a federation of seven states: Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Ajman, Fujairah, Ras al Khaimah, Sharjah and Umm al Qaiwain. Since Abu Dhabi became the first of the emirates to begin exporting oil, the country's society and economy have been transformed. Oil revenues have been invested into healthcare, education and the national infrastructure, diversifying the economy and creating booming business, tourism and construction sectors.

During the credit boom that built up after 2000, the UAE emerged as the cosmopolitan hub for the Middle East. Foreign investment paved the way for construction projects such as Palm Island or the Burj Khalifa skyscraper, the world's tallest building. Residents in the UAE enjoy a high standard of living because of oil wealth, and economic diversification has dampened the effects of oil price fluctuations on the stock market.

The Dubai International Film Festival and the Sharjah International Book Fair attract visitors from all over the world. Both Abu Dhabi and Dubai have ambitious plans to open world-class museums and galleries, and there is also a lively dance and music scene with festivals and international acts performing across the UAE. Sports fans can head to the Formula One Grand Prix, and the UAE is a paradise for shoppers, boasting several giant shopping malls. Dubai's gold souk is nothing short of spectacular, and well worth a visit.



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Education

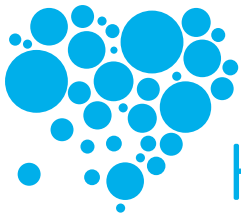
The UAE offers excellent education for its nationals through its fully subsidised public schools and universities. Primary and secondary school education is compulsory for all UAE Nationals. Teaching is carried out in Arabic with the emphasis of English as a second language. They have some excellent private schools (primary, intermediate and secondary) and universities which are internationally accredited to some of the best learning institutions in the world. Almost all the teaching in these schools is carried out in English.



School fees vary from school to school, but in general compare quite favourably to the prices you would be charged for private schools in the Western world. There are over 130 private schools in the UAE, many of which specifically cater to the large English-speaking expat community. Many follow the British education system and teach the National Curriculum of England in primary school, then offer IGCSE and A-Level qualifications at the senior level. Other institutions follow the US, Indian or UAE public school syllabus, with a handful following other curricula like the Australian National Curriculum.



It's absolutely essential to apply as soon as possible. Most schools will post admission requirements and application procedures on their websites; in many cases it's possible to begin the application process from abroad. Good international schools are flooded with applications each year, and this should be one of the first priorities for expats with children when planning their relocation.



Healthcare



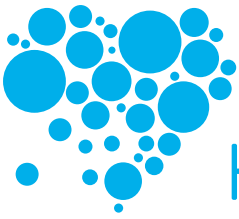
Standards of healthcare are considered high in the United Arab Emirates, resulting from increased government spending during strong economic years. The UAE currently has over 40 public hospitals, and the Ministry of Health is undertaking a multimillion-dollar program to expand health facilities and hospitals, medical centres, and trauma centres in the seven emirates.

Across the UAE, the majority of medical services are up to European standards. The comprehensive, government-funded health service, and a fast developing private health sector, have pushed healthcare indicators to respectable levels. Life expectancy at birth is 78.3 years. Malaria, measles and poliomyelitis, once endemic in the UAE, have been eradicated. Chronic disease, such as diabetes and coronary heart disease, is the new target. Health promotion campaigns to improve lifestyles are underway.

Expats can buy their own health insurance, and apply for a health card from the Health Ministry, which gives access to the state system in emergency. Those with private cover may not be welcomed in some state hospitals for elective treatment. There is no automatic provision for this. In short, if you have private insurance, you're expected to use a private hospital. It's a good idea to know the location and contact details of your nearest private hospital.

Cost of Living

Though rental rates have declined slightly since peaking in 2008, when it comes to the cost of living expats should anticipate their largest expense to be accommodation. The cost of accommodation varies considerably, and is usually paid upfront or with post-dated cheques for a typical minimum term of one year.



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Grocery prices are reasonable, but expatriates living in the UAE who search out luxury goods or brand names from home will need to be prepared to pay higher prices for those items. Local food stuffs will always be better priced than imported goods, so don't be afraid to try the Emirati equivalents to cut costs. Alcohol is expensive and can only be purchased in hotel bars and clubs (or for your own home if you have a license). Fuel costs are low, as are vehicle costs when compared to UK prices.

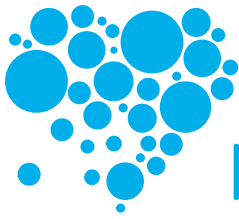
In the 2012 Mercer Cost of Living survey, no cities in the UAE featured in the top ten most expensive cities in which to live. Abu Dhabi (76) overtook Dubai (94) in the rankings and became the most expensive city in the United Arab Emirates. One of the biggest benefits to expatriates of living in the UAE is the low taxation, and this has a positive impact on the cost of such items as vehicles, electronic goods and local produce.

Transport

As petrol is quite cheap in the UAE, the main mode of transportation is the car. International car rentals and local companies offer great deals to expats who want to rent a car. Expats should, however, not hesitate to shop around and compare prices as rates may vary. In order to own a car, you must have a valid residency visa.

Expats should make sure to exchange their driver's license from home for a local one. The regulations for this process may vary from emirate to emirate. However, once the local driving permit has been issued, driving is legal throughout the entire country. Expats also need to be prepared for plenty of speed controls with high fines. In the UAE, traffic regulations are strictly enforced, and even small violations can cause a lot of trouble.





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Those who do not want to drive themselves can always take a taxi. Taxis are available almost everywhere in the UAE at relatively cheap rates. However, rates may differ depending on location and company. Please note that not all taxis are metered.

As most people travel by car or taxi, public transportation options are rare. Buses and minibuses are only available in Abu Dhabi, Al Ain and some parts of Dubai. The Dubai Municipality has taken it upon itself to improve the inter-emirate bus services as well. Some travel as far as Muscat, Oman. Buses in the UAE are generally clean and efficient. Cycling and walking is not very common in the UAE. Not only is it considered too hot to exercise in the open air during the summer months, there are also no bike paths for cyclists.

Kuwait

Population: 3.56 Million

Capital: Kuwait City

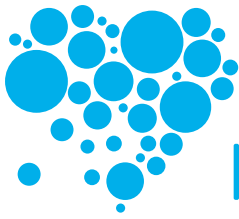
Area: 17,820 sq. km

Official language: Arabic

Currency: Kuwaiti Dinar

Kuwait is a small, oil-rich country nestling at the top of the Gulf. In January 2011 it was announced that the government was working on a strategy to bolster the healthcare system with 3,500 beds and new laboratory and surgical facilities. The government is currently operating 15 general and specialised hospitals, and private companies are estimated to take a share of 15–20% of the healthcare spend (the private sector is expected to grow in the coming years). Oil has dominated the economy, making up around 90% of export revenues.

Kuwait was the first Arab country in the Gulf to have an elected parliament and granted full political rights to women in 2005 in an effort to change the male-dominated system.



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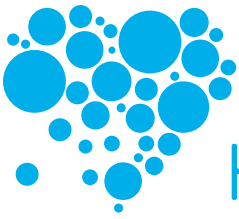
Kuwait has a number of museums and historical sites. Visitors can view rare and precious Islamic antiques at the Museum of Islamic Art and experience traditional pearl diving at the country's annual Pearl Diving Festival. There is also the Tareq Rajab Museum, the Science and Natural History Museum, the National Museum, and the Saif Al-Shamlan Museum. Kuwait City also invites visitors to explore its most famous landmark: the Kuwait Towers. You can travel 187 metres by high-speed lift to the sphere on the tallest of the three towers and enjoy stunning views from the revolving restaurant and observation deck.

Kuwait also offers a variety of more light-hearted entertainment. Entertainment City, considered one of the best amusement parks in the world, is located just outside of Kuwait City, and there is also the enormous Aqua Water Park situated adjacent to the Kuwait Towers.

Education

There are four main levels of education in Kuwait. There are two years of kindergarten education, which is followed by five years of primary schooling, then 4 years of intermediate schooling and finally 3 years of secondary schooling. Both primary and intermediate education is compulsory, and this covers the ages of 6–14. Public education is free in Kuwait, and the standards are very high. Every area of Kuwait has an adequate number of schools and it is very rare that class numbers are high.

There are a number of private schools in the country for which fees will be charged and if you prefer a private education for your children there may be a waiting list, so it is better to look into the options as far in advance as possible. Around one third of children in Kuwait study at a private school and half of private schools teach through the medium of Arabic. The others are foreign language schools, usually run by the Americans or the British. It depends who runs the school as to which curriculum is



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used. If you are from the UK, for example, it is possible for your children to attend a school which offers the same curriculum as schools in Britain and children study for the same examinations.

Healthcare

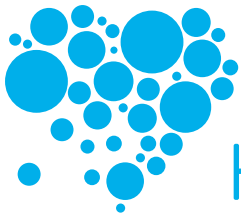
Kuwait has a reputable public healthcare system which provides free or low-cost healthcare to all its residents, including expats. In addition, some employers offer expatriate employees private healthcare plans as part of their remuneration package. There is an excellent level of healthcare and medical treatment, and the country is considered to be on a par with the facilities which are provided in the United States and Western Europe. The country has a very small population and as the facilities are varied and cover almost every medical condition, there are almost no waiting lists and everyone is treated within days.



Cost of Living

Out of an index of 282 countries, Kuwait is placed as the 134th most expensive country for expats to live in the world. In general, products from Kuwait and neighbouring countries represent good value for money whilst imported goods tend to be more expensive.

At the moment, foreigners are not permitted to buy property in Kuwait, although this law may change in the near future. Until then, the only option for expats in Kuwait is to rent a home. Rental homes in Kuwait come in all shapes and sizes: from one-bedroom apartments in skyscraper buildings to spacious single family homes, known as “villas” in Kuwait. Most expats in Kuwait either live in apartments or compounds. The pros and cons of living in an expatriate compound are the same as everywhere. On the upside, compounds usually offer extensive facilities and English-speaking neighbors who can help you find your way around. On the downside, contact with the local population is usually minimal.




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For a comfortable three-bedroom apartment in a decent location, expats can expect to pay between 500 and 600 KD. One-bedroom apartments start at 200 KD. Rental prices have been increasing in recent years. Some employers will provide a housing allowance for expatriate employees.

For an already furnished home, expats should calculate around 20-30% more than the figures quoted above. However, if you do choose to rent an unfurnished place, buying furniture in Kuwait is generally not too expensive. Also, there is always the chance to acquire some household goods from expats who are leaving Kuwait.

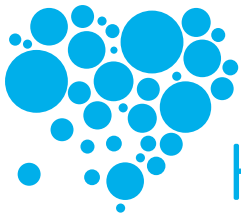
When looking for a new home, carefully check what is included in the monthly rent. Air-conditioning as well as gas may be included or may have to be paid separately.

Transport



Cars are easily the most popular way of getting around in Kuwait. At only 70 fils (approximately US \$0.25) per litre, Kuwait has gas prices most of us can only dream of, and there is also a well-developed infrastructure of urban expressways. When they first arrive, expats may drive a car in Kuwait using an International Driving Permit. Once your new Kuwaiti Civil ID has been issued, however, you are required to acquire a local driver's license. Leasing or renting a car from a local agency is a popular option for expats, as you can avoid having to deal with the hassle of repair problems and potentially unreliable mechanics.

Instead of buying or renting a car a growing number of expats in Kuwait rely on taxis for getting around on a daily basis. Taxis in Kuwait are generally reliable and prices are reasonable. Taxis in Kuwait do not use taximeters. Therefore, always agree on the fare before you actually get into a taxi. Most taxi companies have



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zone-based fares. This may be a problem if your destination is relatively close but lies in a different zone.

Though there are plans to build a railway and metro system in the future, buses are currently the only means of public transportation available in Kuwait. The two public bus companies are the state-owned Kuwait Public Transportation Company (KPTC) and CityBus. Their routes cover most of the state's more densely populated areas.

Buses in Kuwait are generally very safe and reliable, running approximately every ten minutes. Buses are air-conditioned and range from 150 to 200 fils per ride, depending on the distance traveled. (Males should be aware that the seats at the front of the bus are usually reserved for women).

Saudi Arabia

Population: 26 million

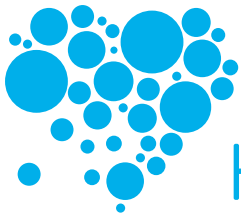
Capital: Riyadh

Area: 2.24 million sq. km

Official language: Arabic

Currency: 1 Riyal = 100 halalah

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has become one of the wealthiest nations in the region thanks to vast oil resources. Sitting on more than 25% of the world's known oil reserves, the country is capable of producing more than 10 million barrels per day. The Kingdom is one of the major players in the Arab and Muslim worlds, its stature built on geographic size, prestige as the birthplace of Islam, and oil. The working



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population is very multi-cultural due to a wide variety of job opportunities, competitive salaries and benefits for all nationalities.

With its rich heritage and colourful past, Saudi Arabia is imbued with tradition and culture. The Kingdom has over 600 annual storytelling, dance and dramatic arts festivals. Of these, the colourful Janadriya Festival is the largest event, celebrating aspects of Saudi culture including fine arts, folk dancing, painting, weaving, literature, traditional and modern poetry.

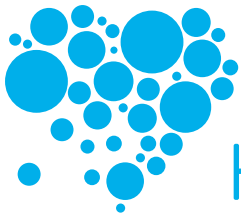
Almost all items and well-known brands can be found in Saudi Arabia. Malls have an array of restaurants and fast food outlets like Domino's Pizza, KFC and Starbucks. In addition to the modern malls, you will find every town has a variety of traditional shopping centres, and a number of fascinating souks (covered markets).

Education

Local state schools are usually not an option for foreign children. There are numerous private schools which cater to the expat community and well-to-do Saudi families. Often, these private schools are under government control to a certain extent, in order to ensure that curriculum and standards of education meet those of state schools.

The language of instruction is often English, and classes are co-educational. Families with older children, however, should make sure that the curriculum and standards of education are similar to those in their home country in order to ease the transition, especially with a view to their children's qualifying for higher education.

Expat families with children usually opt for international schools, of which there are a few in cities like Jeddah, Riyadh, or Al-Khobar. Some of them follow certain national curricula (e.g. British, American, Indian, and Pakistani); others offer the International



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Baccalaureate or a combination of international and third-country curricula. Some schools are affiliated with their national government and therefore may not accept third-country students. Most international schools incorporate pre-school, primary and secondary school under one roof. As places are limited, make sure to apply as soon as possible.

Healthcare

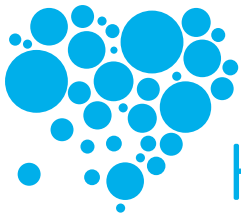
Healthcare in Saudi Arabia is made up of a combination of government health facilities and private medical practices, many of which are staffed by English-speaking doctors. Most Western expatriates opt for private healthcare, with many employers providing medical insurance as part of a benefits package.

Private medical insurance is compulsory for all foreign nationals visiting or living in Saudi Arabia. This insurance is normally provided by the employer and enables the use of either state-run or private clinics and hospitals. With the exception of specialist government hospitals, private facilities are generally preferred by most Western expatriates as they are less crowded and provide a better service.

Basic and specialist healthcare and medical treatment provided are on a par with Western Europe or North America. There are 1,600 government-operated health centres across the country, with a similar number of private facilities. Most neighbourhoods (and many of the larger compounds) have at least one private clinic providing primary healthcare. Most healthcare staff are foreign and English is the common language in most hospitals and clinics (both government-run and private).

While there is strict segregation of the sexes in general society in Saudi Arabia, most clinics and hospitals are open to both men and women, and a female patient can be seen by a male doctor and vice-versa.





Cost of Living

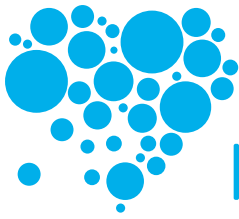


You'll soon notice that there are a lot of construction projects going on in Saudi Arabian cities, as apartment blocks and family houses are being built in great numbers and at great speed to cater to the growing urban population. Most expats live in compounds: low-rise apartment blocks that form some sort of gated community. The more luxurious among them come with their own swimming pool, tennis courts, gym, children's playground, shops, and restaurant. The apartments themselves are usually spacious and well maintained. Whatever type of accommodation you are going for, make sure it provides covered parking facilities to protect your vehicle from sand, dust, and high temperatures. Foreign residents have only been

allowed to own property in Saudi Arabia since 2011, therefore most expats live in rented accommodation. A lot of big companies with a significant share of foreign employees have special deals with local landlords or estate agents, which enable them to offer a certain contingent of accommodation to their expat staff. The renting process itself is relatively straightforward, though you should make sure to have a certified English translation of the Arabic contract. Most accommodation is unfurnished, and there are short and long-term contracts available, ranging from one month to one year. As per usual, any damage done to the property exceeding the boundaries of fair wear and tear will have to be paid for.

Transport

Saudi Arabia has recently undergone an upgrading of its road network, and this is now of the highest standard. You can drive for up to three months in Saudi Arabia on the licence from your home country or on an international licence. After this time, you are required to have a Saudi driving licence. Some licences, including those from the UK and US, are convertible to a Saudi licence without a driving test.



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The majority of Western expatriates in Saudi Arabia use cars as the primary method of transport (privately owned and rental), or use private drivers or taxis. However, there are some public transport options available that provide other ways to get around. Women are not allowed to drive in Saudi Arabia and there are rules about women being in a car with an unrelated man, even a driver, however this is commonly overlooked for foreign nationals, especially those from Western countries.

Hiring a car is possible for any male visitor to Saudi Arabia over 25 years of age who has held a driving licence in the country of origin for over one year. Driving licences are accepted from countries such as the UK and US, or International Driving Permits can be used. Extreme care should be taken when first driving in the country. It is advisable to use a driver or taxis for a while before driving alone. In addition, it is recommended to always pay for comprehensive insurance.

Taxis can be found in all the major cities, however, after major changes of the taxi system in late 2012, taxis cannot be hailed from the street or any other fixed location, and must be reserved in advance, even in busy venues such as airports and shopping centres. Fares are not always charged by meter, so it is best to agree on the fare when booking a taxi or before setting off.

Get in touch, we'd love to hear from you.

20 Alva Street, Edinburgh, EH2 4PY, UK

Phone: +44 (0)131 226 2200

info@headmedical.com

www.headmedical.com