

# Overview of Kuwait

Kuwait is one of the most liberal Islamic states in the Middle East. Often overshadowed by the controversy surrounding neighbours Iran, Saudi Arabia and Iraq, Kuwait has rebuilt itself in a region ravaged by numerous recent conflicts.

In 1990, Iraq claimed Kuwait as its 19th province. A US led alliance expelled the Iraqis in a short war in 1991, and Kuwait consequently erected a barrier along its border to deter its threatening neighbour. Despite the turbulence of its history, Kuwait today is, once again, beginning to reflect its status as an oil-rich nation. Now, Kuwait attracts both business travellers and tourists from the west, particularly the US.

Those visiting Kuwait today are imbued with a lust for adventure that has nothing to do with adrenalin, but rather a yearning to explore and invest in this increasingly westernised Islamic state. In comparison to its more conservative neighbours, women comprise nearly 50 percent of the workforce in Kuwait, and the dual legal system, with some separate legal codes for Muslims and non-Muslims, is a good indication of the progressive nature of the country.

Kuwait developed a reputation as a haven for the arts in the 20th Century and this legacy continues today. The country has the oldest modern arts and literary movements in the region, as well as a famous talent for theatre. Kuwait City has become a buzzing metropolis with gleaming high rises, numerous luxury hotels, and lush parks set along wide avenues. The city's major landmark is Kuwait Towers, visible from the harbour where oil tankers come and go, docking alongside hundreds of cargo ships and pleasure crafts. There is plenty to interest the traveller, not only in Kuwait City itself but also throughout the country, from its arid desert plateau to the fertile coastal belt and its nine small offshore islands.

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## Key Facts

### **Language:**

Arabic is the official language, but English is widely used and understood, and is a compulsory language in secondary schools. Other widely spoken languages include Farsi (common among Iranian expats) and Urdu (common among South Asian expats).

### **Passport/Visa:**

All foreign passengers to Kuwait must hold return or onward tickets, the necessary travel documentation for their next destination, and proof of sufficient funds to cover their expenses while in the country. Visas may be obtained prior to departure from one's country of origin. It is highly recommended that travellers' passport have at least six months' validity remaining after the intended date of departure from their travel destination. Immigration officials often apply different rules to those stated by travel agents and official sources.

### **Currency:**

Kuwait's currency is the Kuwaiti dinar (KWD), and travellers must declare all local and foreign currency equivalent over KWD3000 when they arrive. This covers all forms of currency, not only cash. There are plenty of 24-hour ATMs and major credit cards are widely accepted, though some banks and shops don't accept foreign-issued bank or credit cards. Travellers will find banks with foreign exchange facilities in the large centres. Many banks are open from 8am to 3pm from Sunday to Thursday, but some banks have more varied hours.

### **Electricity:**

240 volts, 50Hz. The UK-style three-pin is in use (Type G).

# Travel to Kuwait

## Climate in Kuwait

Kuwait has a desert climate that is characterised by long, hot, and dry summers, with short, warm winters that have occasional rainfall. The hottest months are between May and October and the rainy season (if you can call it that) runs from December to February, when humidity can also be high. In summer, temperatures can get over 100F (38C), but drop below 70F (21C) in winter and occasionally under 50F (10C), especially at night.

## Health Notes when travelling to Kuwait

Inoculation against typhoid is advisable for travellers eating outside of major hotels and restaurants. General vaccinations for hepatitis A and B, and MMR updates (measles, mumps, and rubella) are also recommended; everyone 12 years of age and older should get fully vaccinated for COVID-19 before visiting.

Additionally, there is a risk of diarrhoeal diseases, which are common in Kuwait. Tap water is safest when boiled, filtered, and disinfected, and, while many people consider tap water relatively safe to drink, most visitors stick to bottled water.

Medical fees are high and medical insurance is recommended. However, many doctors will expect payment in cash regardless of whether travellers have medical insurance or not. All prescription medicines must be accompanied by a doctor's letter detailing exactly why the medication is required and travellers should check the list of medical contraband, so as to avoid importing banned prescription drugs (medication containing alcohol) into the country.

## Safety Notes when travelling to Kuwait

The country is regarded as trouble-free as far as crime is concerned but, while unorganised protests are illegal, they do occur occasionally. Visitors should avoid public gatherings and demonstrations as some have turned violent in the past.

When travelling outside Kuwait City, travellers should keep to tarmac roads and take care on beaches and picnic spots, as landmines and other unexploded ordnance still litter the countryside. Driving in Kuwait is hazardous due to negligent and reckless local drivers, so constant vigilance is essential.

## Customs in Kuwait

As Kuwait is a strict Muslim society, dress in public should be modest, and formal attire is always preferable to casual. Any public display of affection between men and women beyond married couples holding hands is punishable.

Male homosexuality is illegal and the legal status of female homosexuality is ambiguous. Because of the influx of western tourists, some hotels allow unmarried couples to share a room, but unmarried couples are not allowed to stay together on a permanent basis.

Alcohol is not permitted in Kuwait, and the use of this or the importation of obscene material is an imprisoning offense. Touch between the same genders is allowed, but not between opposite genders. Verbal greetings are customary.

Photography near industrial, military, or government buildings is illegal, including oil fields. Religious customs should be respected, particularly during the month of Ramadan when eating, drinking, and smoking during daylight hours should be discreet. This is because it's forbidden and punishable by law. It is important to carry identification at all times.

## Duty Free in Kuwait

Travellers to Kuwait do not have to pay duty on 500 cigarettes, or 2lbs tobacco. It is prohibited to enter the country with alcohol or narcotics; milk products and unsealed salty fish; mineral water, unsealed olives and pickles; homemade foods; fresh vegetables; shellfish and by-products; and fresh figs.

## Doing Business in Kuwait

The business culture is conservative for the most part. Dress should be formal and conservative, particularly for women. There is often accompanying small talk when meeting for the first time, but foreigners should be sure to adhere to local customs.

Public affection between opposite sexes is forbidden; men should take a woman's lead when greeting. Most business is conducted in English, although using a few words of Arabic will be appreciated, particularly for titles.

The working week runs from Sunday to Thursday; business hours vary but are usually from 7am to 1pm and 4pm to 10pm. Government offices and banks are usually open from 8am to 2pm.

## Communication in Kuwait

The international dialling code for Kuwait is +965. All telecommunications services are of a high quality in Kuwait. As international roaming fees can be high, buying a local SIM card can be a cheaper option. Free WiFi is available in most hotels, cafes, and restaurants in tourist areas.

## Tipping in Kuwait

A service charge of 15 percent is usually added to bills in restaurants and hotels. If not, a tip of 10 percent is acceptable; additional tipping is only expected in more expensive hotels. Taxi drivers appreciate a small tip for long journeys. Baggage handlers, petrol attendants, and assistants can also be tipped a small amount, following common practice.

## Passport/Visa Note

All foreign passengers to Kuwait must hold return or onward tickets, the necessary travel documentation for their next destination, and proof of sufficient funds to cover their expenses while in the country. Visas may be obtained prior to departure from one's country of origin. It is highly recommended that travellers' passport have at least six months' validity remaining after the intended date of departure from their travel destination. Immigration officials often apply different rules to those stated by travel agents and official sources.

## Entry Requirements

### Entry requirements for Americans:

US citizens must have a passport that is valid for at least six months beyond their arrival in Kuwait. A visa is required, and can be obtained on arrival for a maximum stay of three months.

### Entry requirements for Canadians:

Canadian citizens must have a passport that is valid for at least six months beyond their arrival in Kuwait. A visa is required, and can be obtained on arrival for a maximum stay of three months.

### Entry requirements for UK nationals:

British citizens must have a passport that is valid for at least six months beyond their arrival in Kuwait. A visa is required, and can be obtained on arrival for a maximum stay of three months.

### Entry requirements for Australians:

Australian citizens must have a passport that is valid for at least six months beyond their arrival in Kuwait. A visa is required, and can be obtained on arrival for a maximum stay of three months.

### Entry requirements for Irish nationals:

Irish citizens must have a passport that is valid for six months beyond their arrival in Kuwait. A visa is required, and can be obtained on arrival for a maximum stay of three months.

### Entry requirements for New Zealanders:

New Zealand citizens must have a passport that is valid for a minimum of 6 months beyond arrival in Kuwait. A visa is required, and can be obtained on arrival for a maximum stay of three months.

### Entry requirements for South Africans:

South African citizens must have a passport that is valid for at least six months beyond their arrival, and require a visa, to enter Kuwait. A visa can be obtained on arrival for up to one month only, provided (i) travellers are holding confirmation that their visa is available on arrival, (ii) that they are entering Kuwait for touristic purposes, (iii) that they have a sponsor in Kuwait who is in possession of the original visa, and (iv) that they stay in Kuwait for a

maximum of 30 days.

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## Kuwait Embassies

### **In the United States:**

Kuwait Embassy, Washington DC, United States: +1 202 966 0702.

### **In Canada:**

Kuwait Embassy, Ottawa, Canada: +1 613 780 9999.

### **In the United Kingdom:**

Kuwait Embassy, London, United Kingdom (also responsible for Ireland): +44 20 7590 3400/3406/3407.

### **In Australia:**

Kuwait Embassy, Canberra, Australia (also responsible for New Zealand): +61 2 6286 7777.

### **In South Africa:**

Kuwait Embassy, Pretoria, South Africa: +27 12 342 0877.

## Foreign Embassies in Kuwait

### **American Embassy**

American Embassy, Kuwait City: +965 259 1001 or +965 2538 6562.

### **Canadian Embassy**

Canadian Embassy, Kuwait City: +965 2256 3025.

### **British Embassy**

British Embassy, Kuwait City: +965 2259 4320

### **Australian Embassy**

Australian Embassy, Kuwait City: +965 2232 2422.

### **Irish Embassy**

Irish Embassy, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates (also responsible for Kuwait): +971 2 495 8200.

### **New Zealand Embassy**

New Zealand Embassy, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia (also responsible for Kuwait): +966 11 488 7988.

### **South African Embassy**

South African Embassy, Mishref: +965 561 7988 (Switchboard) or +965 997 94483 (emergency).

# Currency

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## Exchange rate for 1 KWD - Kuwaiti Dinar

<b>nan</b> BMD	<b>inf</b> EUR	<b>inf</b> USD	<b>inf</b> GBP	<b>inf</b> JPY	<b>inf</b> CAD
Bermudan Dollar	Euro	U.S. Dollar	U.K. Pound Sterling	Japanese Yen	Canadian Dollar
<b>inf</b> CHF	<b>inf</b> AUD	<b>inf</b> UAH	<b>inf</b> KZT	<b>inf</b> LBP	<b>inf</b> LYD
Swiss Franc	Australian Dollar	Ukrainian Hryvnia	Kazakhstani Tenge	Lebanese Pound	Libyan Dinar
<b>inf</b> BOB	<b>nan</b> NPR	<b>nan</b> OMR	<b>nan</b> QAR	<b>inf</b> SGD	<b>inf</b> SEK
Bolivian Boliviano	Nepalese Rupee	Omani Rial	Qatari Rial	Singapore Dollar	Swedish Krona
<b>nan</b> TTD	<b>nan</b> VEF	<b>inf</b> DOP	<b>nan</b> HRK	<b>inf</b> MXN	<b>inf</b> XOF
Trinidad Tobago Dollar	Venezuelan Bolivar	Dominican Peso	Croatian Kuna	Mexican Peso	West African CFA Franc
<b>nan</b> PGK	<b>nan</b> BSD	<b>nan</b> FJD	<b>nan</b> HNL	<b>inf</b> DZD	<b>nan</b> MMK
Papua New Guinean kina	Bahamian Dollar	Fiji Dollar	Honduran Lempira	Algerian Dinar	Myanma Kyat
<b>nan</b> BWP	<b>inf</b> PEN	<b>inf</b> CLP	<b>inf</b> AMD	<b>inf</b> CZK	<b>inf</b> MDL
Botswana Pula	Peruvian Nuevo Sol	Chilean Peso	Armenia Dram	Czech Koruna	Moldova Lei
<b>inf</b> ISK	<b>inf</b> UZS	<b>inf</b> ILS	<b>inf</b> JOD	<b>inf</b> UYU	<b>nan</b> MUR
Icelandic Krona	Uzbekistan Sum	Israeli New Sheqel	Jordanian Dinar	Uruguayan Peso	Mauritian Rupee
<b>nan</b> NIO	<b>inf</b> NOK	<b>inf</b> PLN	<b>inf</b> SAR	<b>nan</b> LKR	<b>inf</b> THB
Nicaraguan Córdoba	Norwegian Krone	Polish Zloty	Saudi Riyal	Sri Lanka Rupee	Thai Baht
<b>inf</b> AED	<b>inf</b> BRL	<b>inf</b> RON	<b>inf</b> HKD	<b>inf</b> XAF	<b>inf</b> VND
U.A.E Dirham	Brazilian Real	Romanian New Leu	Hong Kong Dollar	Central African CFA Franc	Vietnamese Dong
<b>inf</b> ARS	<b>nan</b> XCD	<b>nan</b> GTQ	<b>inf</b> MAD	<b>nan</b> BHD	<b>inf</b> PAB
Argentine Peso	East Caribbean Dollar	Guatemalan Quetzal	Moroccan Dirham	Bahrain Dinar	Panamanian Balboa
<b>inf</b> AZN	<b>inf</b> COP	<b>inf</b> KGS	<b>inf</b> HUF	<b>inf</b> TJS	<b>inf</b> IDR
Azerbaijan Manat	Colombian Peso	Kyrgyzstan Som	Hungarian Forint	Tajikistan Ruble	Indonesian Rupiah
<b>inf</b> EGP	<b>inf</b> KRW	<b>inf</b> PYG	<b>inf</b> MYR	<b>inf</b> CRC	<b>inf</b> NZD
Egyptian Pound	South Korean Won	Paraguayan Guaraní	Malaysian Ringgit	Costa Rican Colón	New Zealand Dollar
<b>inf</b> PKR	<b>inf</b> RUB	<b>inf</b> ZAR	<b>inf</b> TND	<b>nan</b> BBD	<b>inf</b> BGN
Pakistani Rupee	Russian Rouble	South African Rand	Tunisian Dinar	Barbadian Dollar	Bulgarian Lev
<b>inf</b> TRY	<b>inf</b> PHP	<b>inf</b> TWD	<b>inf</b> NGN	<b>nan</b> XPF	<b>nan</b> GHS
Turkish Lira	Philippine Peso	New Taiwan Dollar	Nigerian Naira	CFP Franc	Ghanaian Cedi
<b>nan</b> JMD	<b>nan</b> ANG	<b>nan</b> BND	<b>inf</b> RSD	<b>inf</b> CNY	<b>inf</b> DKK
Jamaican Dollar	Neth. Antillean Guilder	Brunei Dollar	Serbian Dinar	Chinese Yuan	Danish Krone
<b>inf</b> TMT	<b>inf</b> INR				
New Turkmenistan Manat	Indian Rupee				

# Overview of the Attractions in Kuwait

## Public Holidays in Kuwait

	2020	2021
<b>New Year's Day</b>	Mon. January 1	Mon. January 1
<b>The Prophet's Birthday</b>	Tue. October 29	Sat. October 19
<b>National Day</b>	Sun. February 25	Sun. February 25
<b>Kuwait Liberation Day</b>	Mon. February 26	Mon. February 26
<b>The Prophet's Ascension</b>	Fri. March 22	Mon. March 11
<b>Arafat Day</b>	Mon. July 29 to Tue. July 30	Thu. July 18 to Fri. July 19
<b>Eid al-Fitr (end of Ramadan)</b>	Fri. May 24 to Sun. May 26	Mon. May 13 to Wed. May 15
<b>Eid al-Adha (Feast of the Sacrifice)</b>	Wed. July 31 to Thu. August 1	Sat. July 20 to Sun. July 21
<b>Islamic New Year</b>	Tue. August 20	Fri. August 9