

Discover

# Riyadh



Riyadh: A Pocket Guide

*Saudi*  
Welcome  
to Arabia

# You've arrived!

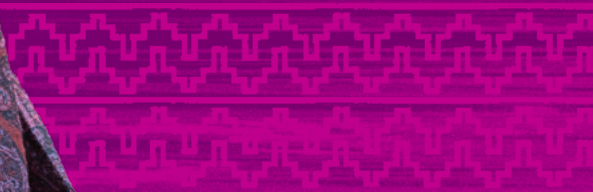
We're so happy you made it to Riyadh. Saudi is full of **wonder and adventure**, and this guidebook is here to help you make the most of your time in the capital. Use it to learn **common expressions**, scope out **upcoming events**, find **important phone numbers** and so much more. As you flip through its pages, you'll discover food you must try and learn about coffee and cafe culture.

Then find recommendations for indoor and outdoor activities in and around the capital and tips on where to shop. Finally, **flip to the back of the book for a checklist of must-see spots**, space for you to take notes and travel games for your kiddos.

**Your Saudi adventure begins now. Enjoy every magical moment of it. Happy travels.**



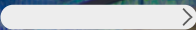
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01

Useful  
Information



# Useful Information

## What to Wear in Saudi

Traditional Saudi clothing is worn out of love and pride by locals. Traditionally, women wear an abaya (a long robe or cloak that covers the whole body) over their everyday clothing, and men wear a thobe (a long-sleeved, gownlike garment); however, not all Saudis wear traditional clothing all the time. As a tourist, you are not expected to wear the same attire as locals, or cover to the same extent, but it's highly recommended that you dress modestly. For example, loose-fitting clothing that covers the elbows and ankles is recommended for both men and women in public.

## Numbers to Know

Before you dive into our guide of Riyadh, take note of these important numbers just in case you need any assistance along your way.

### TRAVEL TIP

When visiting religious sites, women must cover their heads, so it's a good idea to bring a scarf with you.



### EMERGENCY NUMBERS

Police:	999
Ambulance:	997
Civil Defense (e.g. fire, natural disasters):	998
Traffic Accidents:	993
Highway Patrol:	996
Coast Guard:	994
Tourism Hotline:	930



## Welcome to Riyadh!

Riyadh's blend of medieval and millennial makes for an enchanting cultural union — one where Arabia's first roots can be traced, and where its bold future can be envisioned. The city's fascinating, centuries-old history can be found within its atmospheric souqs, compelling museums and ancient architecture, but it's also a modern metropolis, with glittering high-rises and a growing contemporary art scene. Read on for ideas about what to do in Saudi, whether you're traveling on your own or with your family.



But first, a bit about the language: Arabic is the official language of Saudi Arabia and the primary language used in all dealings and public transactions. English serves as an informal second language and is spoken by much of Saudi's population. All road signs are bilingual, showing information in both Arabic and English.

### TRAVEL TIP

#### Common Expressions

Salam Alaykum = Hello/Hi

Min Fdlek = Please

Eewa = Yes

La = No

Shukran = Thank you

Afwan = You're welcome



A nighttime photograph of a modern city skyline. Several skyscrapers are illuminated with vibrant green and blue lights. One building on the left features a large, colorful, abstract light display. In the foreground, a highway overpass is visible, supported by concrete pillars. Light trails from vehicles on the highway create streaks of orange and red at the bottom of the frame. A large, semi-transparent green graphic with a geometric pattern is overlaid on the left side of the image, containing the text '02 Transportation'.

02

Transportation

# Transportation

## Getting Around Riyadh

Now that you're in Riyadh, you have a variety of choices for getting around.

### TRAVEL TIP

Leaving the airport? Follow signs to pick up your rental car, look for a line of local taxis or order a car through a ride-sharing app.



**Rental Cars:** Choose from a host of car rental companies, including Sixt, IDrive and Budget. Pick up your car at the airport or a location in the city.



**Ride-Sharing Apps:** Preorder a car through apps such as Careem, Uber, Bolt or Jeeny. Each service averages about SAR30 (about US\$8) per 15-minute trip.



**Taxis:** The city's local taxis are easy to find — just look for a queue of green cars. The base fare is SAR5 (about US\$1.33), and after that you'll pay SAR2 (about US\$0.50) per kilometer to go anywhere in the city.



## Where to Stay

While you probably know where you're staying, you may find yourself wanting to sleep one night at a hotel that's closer to an event you're attending, or perhaps you're looking for an untraditional lodging experience. If so, you're in luck. In Riyadh, there's no shortage of places to stay.



**Hotels:** Stay near the action of the capital's upcoming events at hotels like the stylish Burj Rafal Riyadh, the luxurious Marriott Riyadh Diplomatic Quarter, the new, fully-furnished apartments at Fraser Suites or the upscale Radisson Blu Qurtuba.



**Unique Stays:** Want to stay somewhere truly original? Download Gathern to your mobile device (available at the App Store for iOS and Google Play for Android). Use this app to find a variety of unique vacation rentals like chalets, farms and tents located in and around Riyadh.

### TRAVEL TIP

Check out special hotel packages on [visitsaudi.com](https://visitsaudi.com)

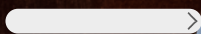




A collage of food dishes including fries, meatballs, and tomatoes. The background is a dark wooden table with several plates of food. In the top right, there's a plate of golden french fries. In the middle right, there's a plate of meatballs in a dark sauce. In the bottom left, there's a plate of tomatoes with a sauce and lemon slices. A red napkin is visible in the top left. A large orange square with a white geometric pattern is overlaid in the center, containing the text '03' and 'Food'.

03

Food



# Food

## Taste of Riyadh

Saudi's culinary scene is diverse, delicious and booming, especially in the capital city, where there's no shortage of fine dining, street food and cuisines from around the world. There's something to suit every appetite during your visit, whether you crave traditional Saudi kabsa or international dishes like Indian curry, American burgers, Mediterranean spreads and Chinese fried rice.

### Najd Village

Enjoy a combined dining and heritage experience, with faithfully re-created Najd architecture and authentic recipes such as kabsa, jareesh and hashi.

### Takya

Sample Saudi fusion food inspired by the country's many different regions.

### Bistro by Tao

Savor Mediterranean, mezze-style spreads at this chic eatery in Riyadh's Nojoud Mall.

### Section B

Bite into some of the juiciest burgers in Saudi.

### MUST TRY: DATES

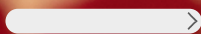
Dates are an iconic symbol of Arabian hospitality. The nutritious fruit has been a staple of the Saudi diet since ancient times. You can find them stuffed with nuts or candied fruits, mashed and baked into pastries and cookies, and even incorporated into savory rice dishes; however, many Saudis say that eating dates unadorned remains the best way to appreciate them. Find them in markets and on menus across the capital city.





# 04

## Coffee and Culture



# Coffee and Cafe Culture

## Coffee Culture

While coffee is now enjoyed in almost every part of the world, the beverage first gained popularity in the Middle East. Some food historians trace its origins back more than **1,000** years, when legend has it a ninth-century Ethiopian goat herder noticed the energizing effect that the bright red berries of a certain bush had on his flock. (What we call a coffee bean is actually the seed of a cherrylike fruit.) Coffee eventually made its way to Makkah in the mid-**16th** century. Perhaps because of its long history in the region, coffee is a symbol of hospitality throughout the Middle East. It is the first beverage offered to any Saudi guest, and it is served at events, social gatherings and weddings, as well as in private homes, offices and, of course, cafés. Kick off your coffee culture journey at these cafés in Riyadh.

### Elixir Bunn

One of the capital's first specialty coffee venues, Elixir is run by passionate baristas who love to do quirky and creative things with their coffee. Beans are roasted on-site, and the interior has a stripped-back look with lots of sharp, linear angles. But Elixir isn't just about the caffeine hits; this is also a tasty dessert spot. Don't think about ordering a cortado without a slab of pecan pie to go with it.

### Al Masaa Café

Whether it's night or day, be sure to ask for a seat facing out toward the Kingdom Center — although the view is just one reason to visit Al Masaa, located right in the heart of the capital. Some other reasons you're sure to like this spot? The excellent coffee, the delicious lunch menu and the refreshing mocktails.

### Montreux Cafe:

Opened by local Alhala Alfakher upon his return from Italy, where he fell in love with tiramisu, this café offers variations on the layered dessert as well as specialty coffee drinks, including the popular pistachio latte. Try saffron, honey cake or pistachio tiramisu at one of the more than **10** Montreux locations throughout Riyadh.





05

Outdoor  
Activities

# Outdoor Activities

## Outdoor Activities in Riyadh

While Riyadh may conjure up images of an exciting metropolis full of museums, restaurants and galleries, its great outdoors are equally exciting and even more breathtaking.



### TRAVEL TIP

The Diplomatic Quarter has a rich wellness driven community, including women walking for fitness groups, outdoor yoga sessions in the winter, and a farmers market on weekends during the winter season.



### The Diplomatic Quarter:

This is just what you need to let your mind, body, and soul relax without heading away from the city. On your route, you'll pass by wildflowers, stunning rock formations, and landscaped parks. If you've got energy left, you can take a detour to a scenic valley nearby called Wadi Hanifah and watch the sunset as it paints the landscape in shades of purple and dark orange.

### Wadi Hanifah:

The spectacular Wadi Hanifah valley runs **120** kilometers north to south through Riyadh and serves up beautiful desert scenery along the Wadi Hanifah waterway, making it perfect for you to bike or hike. Start on the north end, near Wadi Hanifah Park, where you'll find a variety of maintained trails.

### Desert Lake:

If a desert lake sounds intriguing to you, drive to Al Kharrarah National Park at the edge of Riyadh to see one. Lake Kharrarah, also called the Lake of Liquid Light, forms during the rainy season and can be deep enough to swim. Take a dip or enjoy the surrounding red sand hills as you picnic with your family on the shore.

## Family-Friendly Outdoor Activities

### King Abdullah Park:

If you're looking for a relaxing place for some outdoor fun with the family, head to King Abdullah Park, the largest in Riyadh. The well-maintained park is known for its dancing water fountain displays, gorgeous gardens and green lawns, including a large play area for kids.

Other fun attractions for the family:

### Riyadh National Zoo

Go wildlife spotting at Saudi's largest wildlife sanctuary, home to more than **1,500** animals.

### Riyadh Oasis

Glamp, shop, enjoy music, sports and more at this winter desert pop-up.

### Salem Park

Feed ducks, go for a boat ride, picnic, play and much more at this large greenspace in the city.

## MUST DO: RIYADH'S DUNES

No trip to Saudi is complete without seeing its spectacular dunes. If you're a thrill-seeker, Riyadh's sand dunes offer sandboarding, dune bashing and other adventures. Prefer a more traditional scene? You can try kashta, a true Arabian camping experience that invites travelers to sleep among the sand dunes and beneath the stars. Bonus: Many kashta experiences also provide traditional food and drinks for you to try and activities like camel riding.



# 06

## Indoor Activities





# Indoor Activities

## Indoor Activities for You in Riyadh

Saudi's cultural scene is evolving, and nowhere is this more apparent than in its capital, where a thriving arts scene is bubbling below the surface and beginning to take hold. Riyadh is home to some of the best galleries and a wealth of heritage sites that are a testimony to its rich and beguiling history. Whether you're seeking contemporary art or traditional markets and museums, get your fix with this shortlist.

### Mono Gallery

A stark and stylish facade greets you at this small gallery. Opened in **2018** and draped across three exhibition spaces, Mono Gallery is committed to promoting the efforts of contemporary artists across Saudi.

Recent names exhibited in the Mono include the Iraqi sculptor Muatasim Al Kubaisy, whose famous bronze creations use the Arabian horse as a metaphor for the wider Arab world, and the popular Makkah-born artist Yousef Ahmed Jaha, who produces abstract images using oil on canvas.



### Naila Art Gallery

Having exhibited the work of pivotal regional artists, such as the Egyptian painter Farouk Hosny and the postmodern Syrian expressionist Ahmad Moualla, whose dramatic, larger-than-life canvases blur the lines between reality and fantasy, Naila has firmly established itself as a top-tier gallery within Riyadh's growing art scene. The gallery has worked with world-class cultural institutes, including the British Council, the Goethe-Institut and Institut Du Monde Arabe, and its current artists include the Qatif-born Ghada Al Hassan, whose paintings and sculptures are inspired by history and collective memory, and the Dutch artist Caroline Havers, now a resident of Riyadh.

### The Antiquities Museum

The Antiquities Museum is home to one of Saudi's most important collections of ancient artifacts, a treasure trove of items unearthed from key archaeological sites across the region and a direct link to the country's past.

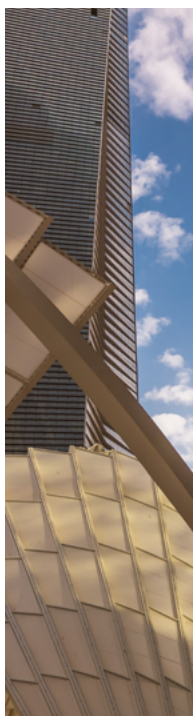
Tucked in the sandstone buildings of King Saud University — the oldest university in Saudi Arabia — its exhibits are the product of excavations carried out by the institute since the 1970s. The relics they uncovered paint an evocative portrait of pre-Islamic and early Islamic civilizations, and to wander among them is to embark on a journey back in time.

### National Museum of Saudi Arabia

Education and entertainment collide inside this two-story, 28,000-square-meter museum, which has eight galleries. Though modern on the outside, the National Museum of Saudi Arabia brings visitors on a journey through centuries of culture, art and history, from prehistoric Arabia to today. Discover interactive exhibits, replicas of buildings in old Jeddah, Neolithic rock art, antiques, manuscripts and centuries-old crafts while exploring the diverse economic and commercial activities of Arabia.

## Indoor Activities Kids Will Love in Riyadh

If the kids tire of museums and galleries, Riyadh offers many interactive activities indoors, such as go-karting, movies, shopping, eating and, of course, photo ops!



### Doos Karting

A little friendly family competition may just be the order of the day. Take your family for a spin on the tracks at Doos Karting. Considered one of the largest go-karting circuits in the city, Doos offers an immersive experience with exciting multilayer spiral ramps and a **350-meter** indoor course.

### Riyadh Park Mall

With an IMAX cinema and arcade under its palm trees and wavelike glass roof, Riyadh Park Mall is a great place to walk and shop (and eat) when the temperatures heat up outside. Peruse international brands such as Puma, Abercrombie & Fitch and DKNY as well as kid favorites like Sanrio. Edible offerings include everything from PF Chang's to The Cheesecake Factory. No one will leave hungry!

### The Zone

The Zone, where stores and restaurants are clustered around a main plaza, is another super-modern option for fans of fashion, fun and food. The light shows in the “dancing fountains” are sure to thrill young and older audiences alike.

## MUST SEE: THE SKY BRIDGE AT KINGDOM CENTER

Take the high-speed elevator to the 99th floor of the iconic Kingdom Center for access to Riyadh's best urban panorama. Suspended 300 meters above the city, the tower's curved Sky Bridge offers spectacular views. Visit for a fresh take on Riyadh's mesmerizingly modern skyline, to get your bearings over the capital or just for the Instagram-worthy photo opportunities.



07

Shopping

# Shopping



## Riyadh's World-Class Shopping

The city's most famous market is the Souq Al Zal, which remains as noisy and vibrant as when it first emerged in **1901**. It offers everything from gold coins to quirky handicrafts and dusty antiques, including traditional Saudi items such as dallah coffee pots and mabkhara incense burners. For a more modern experience, Riyadh is home to boutiques from haute couture designers, such as Alexander McQueen, Burberry and Cartier — many of which are found at the upmarket Centria Mall. But perhaps one of the most exciting shopping innovations in recent years has been the advent of the concept store. Here are two to explore.

### MUST SEE: NUMBER NINE

Named after the founder's favorite number, Number Nine is part store and part art gallery. This concept shop should be at the top of your list if you're hunting for quirky gifts for family and friends, niche brands or cult accessories.

**Pattern:** Softly lit and inviting, Pattern features a select range of art, fashion, home accessories and lifestyle products gathered from both up-and-coming Saudi artists and established international names.

**Personage:** Fusing luxury, ambience and entertainment into one warehouse-style destination, this three-floor outlet reimagines retail. Vogue Arabia writes that Personage is an appreciated addition to Saudi Arabia's creative scene, describing the store as "a contemporary space that welcomes dialogue on many of the larger questions society is currently grappling with through art, design and meaningful conversation."

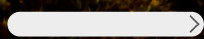
The store's first level, named Vim, houses specially curated apparel, accessories, perfumes, jewelry and shoes, while the second level, Ooze, opens out into an exclusive lounge where shoppers can relax with food and drinks. The third floor, named Scheme, is an open space available for a diverse array of meetings, shows and private events. Thanks to Personage's constantly rotating stock, you can expect to see something new every time you visit.





08

Notes and  
Checklist



# Notes and Checklist

## Take Note!

Use this page to take notes and to check-off some of the must-see spots you just read about.

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## YOUR RIYADH CHECKLIST

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|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/>  Eat a Saudi Date            | <input type="checkbox"/>  Visit the National Museum of Saudi Arabia |
| <input type="checkbox"/>  Drink Arabic Coffee         | <input type="checkbox"/>  Go to Sky Bridge at Kingdom Center        |
| <input type="checkbox"/>  See the Edge of the World   | <input type="checkbox"/>  Shop at Souq Al Zal                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/>  Explore Riyadh's Sand Dunes |  |

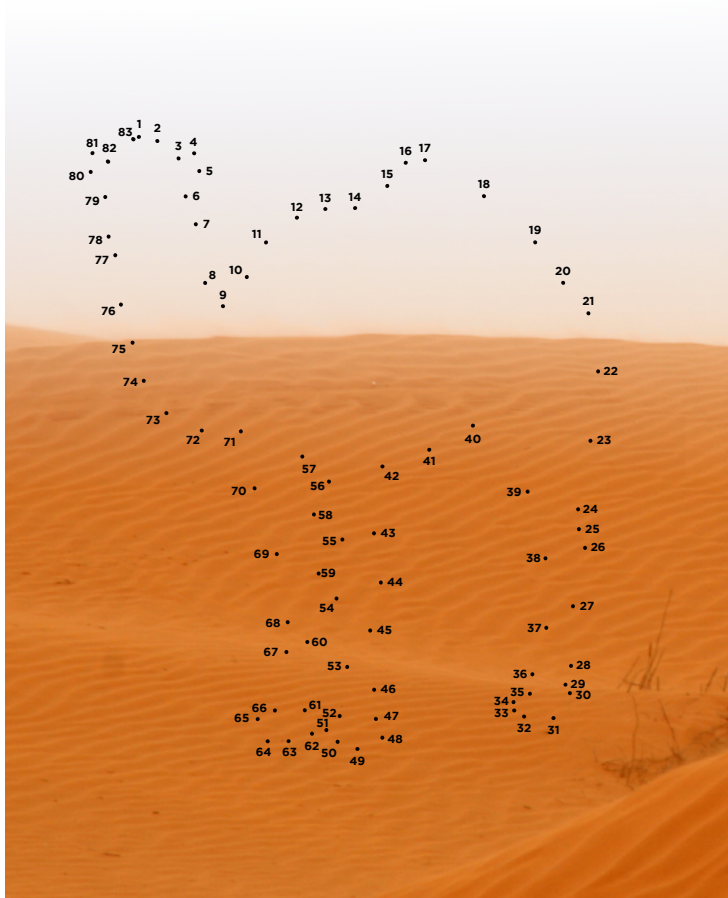


# Kids Page

## Travel Games for Your Adventure

### Connect The Dots for a SAUDI Surprise

Connect the dots for a picture of one of the region's most revered animals. Want more info about what your picture depicts? Turn this page upside down.



You drew a dromedary, also known as an Arabian camel, which has one hump and can reach up to **2** meters tall. For more than **3,000** years, camels have been a part of life on the peninsula.

# Saudi

Welcome  
to Arabia

