

Saudi Arabia at a Glance



The Makkah Gate

Official title: The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Capital: Riyadh (population two and half million). Government: Monarchy. Head of State - The Custodian of The Two Holy Mosques King Fahd Bin Abdul Aziz.

Area: 900,000 sq. miles. Population: 16,939,294 (1992 census). Language: Arabic. English is widely spoken. Religion: Islam. The Quran is the holy book of Islam. As the birthplace of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and the site of Islam's holy cities of Makkah and Madinah, Saudi Arabia is a focal point for the world's one billion Muslims. It is of green colour. Its width is two-thirds of its length and it carries the creed of monotheism: There is no God but God; Muhammad is the Messenger of God. An unsheathed sword symbolizing justice follows below the inscription. The flag of the Kingdom is the only one in the

Flag

Emblem

world that can never be flown at half-mast because of the inscription of 'Tawhid'.

The emblem of the Kingdom is represented by two crossed swords with a palm tree at the top. The palm tree symbolizes prosperity and growth while the swords represent justice, power and safety.

Climate

Temperature varies from 7°C to 50°C. Rainfall: scanty and irregular. Long, hot and dry summer. Temperature drops markedly at night.

Currency

The 'Riyal', divided into 100 'halalas' (One US dollar is equivalent to 3.75 SR).

Education

Free education facilities for all citizens up to highest level. No. of universities: 7; colleges: 105 (including 11 women's colleges), schools: 15,500, students at all levels: 30,00,000, teachers at all levels: 185,000.

Health

Highest per capita health expenditure in the world. Free medical facilities for all citizens, including expatriates. No. of hospitals: 267, beds: 40,000, doctors: 18,200, primary health centres: 3028.

Economy

Free enterprise system. Government encourages free entrepreneurship. SR 510 billion (1996): growth rate: 8.6 per cent compared to SR 469 billion in 1995, growth rate being 4.3 per cent. SR 35,000 (9,500 US dollar approx.)

GDP

Per capita income: \$10,000.

Industry

Agriculture

Over 2,500 industrial units built at a cost of more than SR 100 billion. Cultivable land: 4.5 million hectares. Land under actual cultivation: 2.9 million hectares. Pasture land: 48 million hectares. Main crops: Dates: 500,000 tons, wheat: 40,00,000 tons. Other crops: cereals, fruits, potatoes and vegetables.

Electricity

6,500 towns and villages have been covered under electrification programme. Sixth development plan (1996-2000 AD)



Imports

wheat, cement, building materials, foodstuffs.

Electrical goods, house-hold appliances, garments, spices, silk-products, cutlery, imitation jewellery.

Riyadh (capital), Makkah, Madinah, Taif, Jizan.

Jeddah, Dammam, Yanbu, Jubail, Jizan.

23 airports, including three international airports at Jeddah, Riyadh and Dhahran.

Number of telephones: 15,00,000. Number of telex lines: 30,000.

603

17

90

600 kilometers. Annual passenger traffic: 40,00,000, annual goods traffic: two million tons.

95,500 kilometres, including 35,000 kilometres asphalted.

206 dams with storage capacity of 400 million cubic metres.

27 plants with capacity to produce 573 million cubic metres daily.

360

Ancient historical monuments and important archaeological sites are located mainly at Madinah, Al-Ala, Madain Saleh and Najran.

Well known resort areas are: Taif, Al-Shifa, Al-Hada, Al-Bahia, Abha, Khams, Mushait, Al-Namas. Besides, there is beautiful 'half-moon' beach in the Eastern region and port city Jeddah's beautiful 'coral reefs' and long beaches.

Oil: total crude oil reserves: 260 billion barrels (25 per cent of world reserve); Gas: total reserve: 180 trillion cubic feet; lead, nickel, zinc, gold, tin & tungsten, iron, copper, uranium, phosphates, bauxite, potassium, granite and marbles.

Saudi Real Estate Development Fund has so far spent nearly SR 100 billion for construction of over 400,000 houses.

Oil, petro-chemicals, fertilizers, metals,

Tourism

Minerals mining

Housing

Exports

Tourism

Development of the two holy mosques

Tourism

envisages electrification in 90 per cent of the total area of the Kingdom.

Among the most tourist resort areas are: Taif, Al-Shifa, Al-Hada, Al-Bahia, Abha, Khams, Mushait, Al-Namas. Besides, there is beautiful 'half-moon' beach in the Eastern region and port city Jeddah's beautiful 'coral reefs' and long beaches.

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Cultural Heritage of Saudi Arabia

Continued from page 19

system. Already introduced by their families to Islamic and Arab values and traditions, young Saudis entering schools are exposed to literature and the arts. Through their curricula and special events, the schools instill in Saudi youths a deep respect for their past and

international cultural events, such as poetry competitions, essay competitions, calligraphy and art exhibits to name a few. The organization sponsors a series of regular exhibitions, literary readings and symposiums at its regional offices and at its Riyadh headquarters. It also sponsors the participation

of Saudis in international arts and cultural events.

Another organization involved in arts and culture is the Saudi Arabian Society for Culture and Arts, which was founded in 1972 and is affiliated with the General Presidency of Youth Welfare. Divided into 6 departments - cultural, theatrical, music and vocal arts, folklore, arts, information and publishing - the society's mandate includes sponsoring Saudi artists and providing avenues for these new talents to develop and display their skills. In addition, the society has established a library and an information centre as well as the Kingdom's first cultural centre located in Riyadh.

The King Faisal Foundation promotes Arab and Islamic culture both within the country and abroad. The Riyadh-based organization awards its annual King Faisal International Prize to individuals who have promoted literature, science and medicine. The King Fahd Library in Riyadh has one of the largest collections of rare manuscripts on Arabic and Islamic literature and the arts and is a premier research facility in the Middle East.

JENADRIYAH FESTIVAL: In 1985 the first Saudi National Heritage and Cultural festival was held in Jenadriyah, near Riyadh. The annual event, organized by the National Guard under the patronage of the King, epitomizes Saudi Arabia's commitment to preserving and exploring its cultural heritage. The 15-day annual festival provides over a million Saudis with glimpses of the past. A traditional camel race opens the festival. During the course of the festival, folklore troupes perform the 'Ardha' and other national dances while singers from around the Kingdom perform traditional songs and music. Literary figures from across the country participate in poetry competitions. In view of the importance of the national festival a permanent 'Heritage Village' has been erected at Jenadriyah.

ISLAMIC ARCHAEOLOGY: Historic preservation is an essential element of Saudi Arabian culture. The Kingdom's archaeological heritage is protected by the Department of Museums and Antiquities which has excavated, catalogued and preserved prehistoric and historic sites. Important archaeological work is also carried out by the Department of Archaeology at King Saud University in Riyadh. Diriyah, the ancestral home of the Al-Saud family and the first capital of the Saudi state, was a major restoration project undertaken by the Kingdom's archaeologists. As the birthplace of Islam, special emphasis is placed on preserving the Kingdom's Islamic archaeological heritage. In addition to the Holy Mosque in Makkah and the Prophet's Mosque in Madinah, a large number of mosques around the Kingdom, such as those built by the first caliphs after the death of the Prophet Muhammad, have been meticulously restored. The restoration of the old Qasr Al-Hokm area in Riyadh is indicative of the Kingdom's commitment to preserve and cherish its cultural heritage for the benefit of its citizens.

ARCHITECTURAL INTEGRITY: The contemporary Saudi architects are increasingly using traditional Islamic concepts in building designs. Historically, building designs and materials were dictated by the climate, geography and resources of the various regions. Usually, stone, red bricks and coral taken from the Red Sea reefs, are used in different areas according to convenience and building materials. The Saudi architects have been instrumental in preserving the Kingdom's architectural integrity, as well as in revitalizing traditional building designs. Utilizing the elements

of traditional architecture in the design of new structures strengthens the link between the country's architectural past and its innovative present.

CALLIGRAPHY: Arabic calligraphy dates back approximately 1,400 years to the first century of Islam. Historically, the primary subject matter for calligraphy has been the Holy Quran. Characterized as the quintessential Islamic art form, calligraphy is a revered art in Saudi Arabia. Saudi museums collect and display rare manuscripts and other organizations commission works of calligraphy, provide training in the art form and hold competitions to foster a new generation of calligraphers. Today, calligraphy is a dominant theme in metal work, ceramics, glass, textiles, painting and sculpture throughout Saudi Arabia. Inscriptions can be found adorning the interior walls of mosques, as well as public and private office buildings and homes.



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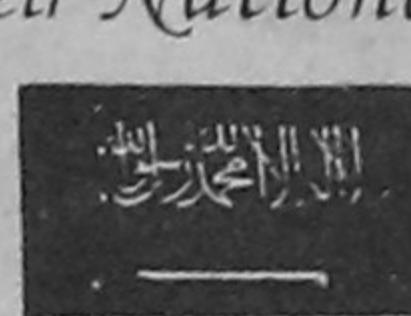


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