

Relocation guide:

# Saudi Arabia

Our guide working and living overseas



# Working in Saudi Arabia

As a key global oil producer with a large land mass, strategic position and rich religious heritage, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia enjoys a prominent status as a regional power in the Middle East.



## THE KEY FACTS:

**Capital:** Riyadh

**Population:** 30,000,000

**Official Language:** Arabic



Bordering the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea, the country shares its borders with Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar and Yemen, and has been ruled by the Al Saud dynasty since the mid-18th century.

The capital city is the bustling metropolis of **Riyadh**, while on the Red Sea, second city Jeddah is a major sea port and commercial hub, as well as the portal to the holy Islamic shrines of Mecca and Medina.

The population of just under 30 million is 90% Arab and the official language is Arabic, although English is widely spoken.

The currency is the **Saudi Riyal (SAR)**, the international dialling code is +966 and the time zone is GMT + three hours. Temperatures can be extreme, with a dry heat of up to 50°C in the summer but down to almost zero in the winter. The key national holiday is 23 September – the date on which the kingdom was unified in 1932.

## Sectors

As an engineering professional, you will be joining millions of foreigners working in Saudi Arabia – current estimates vary from eight to 10 million, or around a third of the workforce.

While a large number are in agriculture or domestic service, many skilled Westerners find employment in the oil sector, petrochemicals and defence. Opportunities are also burgeoning in telecommunications, power generation, natural gas, commercial ship and aircraft repair, agriculture and the construction industry.

With the government investing heavily in the country's infrastructure, opportunities abound in civil engineering, from groundworks to water treatment works.

Dominated by the petrochemical industry, the country also has opportunities in other areas of power generation and heavy engineering, as well as employment in electrical engineering jobs, from power systems to energy storage.

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Saudi Arabia is a large land mass with a growing road and rail infrastructure, and has a long coastline with several marines and ports, and over 200 airports, more than half of which have unpaved runways. In Riyadh, a metro system is expected to be completed by 2017, with Jeddah to follow suit.

#### ABOUT SAUDI ARABIA

## Locations & Culture

The vast capital city, **Riyadh**, is very much business focused, although visitors may enjoy visiting the National Museum and Murabba Palace, located within King Abdul Aziz Historical Park, or the renovated Masmak Fortress.



Golf enthusiasts are well served by several clubs including an 18-hole course at the **Dirab Golf & Country Club**. There are many large shopping malls and the more adventurous can seek out a bargain at the tradition markets, known as souqs.

With a large oil revenue, this wealthy nation is able to fund both public and private construction, from hospitals, schools and government buildings to the design, planning and build of new projects. By 2020, there will be six new industrialised cities, which are being created to help the diversification of the economy and encourage investment.

Professional visitors from outside the region should be mindful of the religious sensibilities of the largely Sunni Muslim population, including the many followers of the orthodox movement of Wahhabism.



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Only Muslim places of worship are allowed in the country; a strict Sharia legal system includes the death penalty for drug traffickers, homosexuality is illegal and women should dress modestly and are not permitted to drive.

Alcohol and many forms of entertainment are banned, including cinema and nightclubs, but there are some stylish restaurants and cafés for eating out.

## What our consultants say...



“Not only is Saudi the world's largest construction market, but Jeddah is set to be the home of the world's largest tower and worlds first structure over 1km high.”

- **Liam Day**, Recruitment Consultant

Get in touch:



Liam Day



@GenesisEng\_



“Saudi Arabia has a population in the region of 23 million; with close to 7 million of these being from an Expat nature. Arabic is the national language but English is widely spoken throughout with the majority of the population holding dual linguistic skills that will ease your relocation to the region.”

- **Martin Ferguson**, Recruitment Consultant

Get in touch:



Martin Ferguson



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## WHAT TO EXPECT

# Transport & Infrastructure

Most professionals and their visiting families are likely to arrive by air at one of the country's six international airports, which include Riyadh's **King Khalid International Airport** (RUH), located just 35km north of the capital.

**Al-Ahasa International Airport (HOF)** and Dammam's **King Fahd International Airport (DMM)** – the largest in the world in terms of area covered – are both located in the Eastern region, close to the extensive oil fields.

On the Red Sea, **King Abdulaziz International Airport (JED)** in Jeddah, close to Mecca, welcomes the largest number of passengers into the country.

Finally, also in the west, Medina is serviced by **Prince Mohammad Bin Abdulaziz International Airport (MED)**, a short distance outside the holy city, and **Prince Abdul Mohsin bin Abdulaziz International Airport (YAB)** on the coast in Yanbu, north of Jeddah.

Once established within the country, employees will have access to almost 30 further regional and domestic airlines.



A network of highways and regional roads cross the country; petrol prices are low and the best roads are maintained in an excellent condition and designed to withstand the high temperatures. The rail network, as you'd expect in an oil-rich country, is much less developed. A dozen major ports are evenly spread along the Persian Gulf and on the Red Sea

## WHAT TO EXPECT

# Living Costs & Working Requirements

Many expats enjoy lucrative contracts, often including subsidies for day-to-day essentials, from housing and transport to schooling for the children and medical cover. Because accommodation in the recommended compounds can be high with a long waiting list, it's a good idea to ask for this to be factored into your employment contract.

The children of foreigners are not permitted to attend state schools, so again it's worth asking for a contractual subsidy to help towards tuition fees at the country's international schools. General groceries are averagely priced; electronics and cars are slightly cheaper than the UK; but there are opportunities to spend your hard-earned cash at the malls and restaurants. More detailed information on living costs can be found at: [www.expattarrivals.com](http://www.expattarrivals.com)

Employment visas can be secured through visa agencies accredited to the Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia. Foreign workers must have a sponsor, who will give permission for them to enter and leave the country, often holding on to their passport and sometimes that of their family members.



**"Foreign workers must have a sponsor who will give permission for them to enter and leave the country"**

While the over-arching influence of Islam informs the culture and day-to-day life in Saudi Arabia, making it a very different environment for those used to Western habits, there is no doubt that the country's buoyant economy and need for skilled workers in specialised areas is a key draw for British engineers.



## In conclusion

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While the over-arching influence of Islam informs the culture and day-to-day life in Saudi Arabia, making it a very different environment for those used to Western habits, there is no doubt that the country's buoyant economy and need for skilled workers in specialised areas is a key draw for British engineers.



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