

ASIA · CITY BREAKS · ARCHITECTURE · CULTURE · HISTORY



Kuwait

Kuwait is a small, wealthy Gulf state that sees few tourists. The disc-studded spheres of the Kuwait Towers define a waterfront skyline built on oil money, while Souq Al-Mubarakiya keeps older trading traditions alive downtown. Add first-rate museums, Failaka Island's Bronze Age and Greek ruins and fine Gulf seafood, but come in the cooler months: summer heat is ferocious.

 Before you go, read the UK government's travel advice for Kuwait and entry requirements (visas, passport validity). Last updated by FCDO 20 August 2026.

 CAPITAL Kuwait City	 CURRENCY Kuwaiti dinar (KWD) £1 ≈ KWD 0.41	 LANGUAGE Arabic, English	 BEST TIME Nov–Mar
 DAILY BUDGET £70–£300 £££ Expensive	 PLUGS Type G, C, D 240V · UK plugs fit	 FLIGHT FROM LONDON 6h 20m direct ~£400–£750 return	 TIME ZONE UTC+3 standard time

Kuwait is essentially a city-state on the shore of Kuwait Bay: most of the population lives in a continuous belt of suburbs running from Jahra round to Fahaheel, with flat desert beyond. A visit is usually short. Two or three days cover the corniche and Kuwait Towers, the Grand Mosque, Souq Al-Mubarakiya and the vast Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Cultural Centre, plus a ferry trip to Failaka Island. Many travellers add Kuwait to a wider Gulf trip or a stopover, and its smaller museums, from the Tareq Rajab collections of Islamic art to the Bedouin weaving at Sadu House, reward anyone curious about the region.

Kuwait feels less showy than Dubai or Doha: daily life revolves around malls, diwanias (evening gatherings at home) and family outings to the corniche, and tourist infrastructure is thin. Hotels are expensive, while fuel and food are good value by Gulf standards. Alcohol is banned outright, nightlife means coffee shops and shisha, and the weekend falls on Friday and Saturday. It suits stopover visitors, Middle East enthusiasts and anyone visiting friends among the large expatriate community. Many are surprised by how present the memory of the 1990–91 Iraqi occupation remains, from the Al-Qurain Martyrs' Museum to the towers' own post-war restoration.

Top 5 highlights

- 1

ARCHITECTURE

Kuwait Towers

Opened in 1979, the three needle-like towers with their blue-green disc-studded spheres are the national symbol. The tallest holds a revolving viewing sphere with sweeping views over the Gulf and the city skyline.
- 2

CULTURE

Souq Al-Mubarakiya

One of Kuwait's oldest markets, a warren of covered lanes selling dates, spices, oud, dishdashas and gold. Come in the evening, when it is cooler and busiest, and eat grilled kebabs or fresh fish at the courtyard restaurants.

3

SACRED SITE

Grand Mosque

Kuwait's largest mosque, opened in 1986 beside Seif Palace, with a vast prayer hall decorated in Islamic and Andalusian styles. Guided tours for non-Muslims run outside prayer times, and suitable cover-ups are provided at the entrance.

4

CULTURE

Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Cultural Centre

One of the world's largest museum complexes, opened in 2018 on the Gulf Road, with immersive galleries devoted to natural history, space, science and Arabian Islamic science. Allow most of a day, especially with children.

5

HISTORY

Failaka Island

Around 20km offshore, Failaka has Bronze Age Dilmun sites, a Hellenistic temple from the era when Alexander's successors called it Ikaros, and villages still scarred by the 1990 invasion. Ferries run from Salmiya.

Biggest cities

LARGEST CITY

Kuwait City

≈ 4.3 million people

The metropolis spreads far beyond its small downtown; stay near the Gulf Road for the towers, souq, Grand Mosque, museums and long walks along the seafront corniche.

2ND LARGEST CITY

Al Jahra

≈ 210,000 people

A separate town at the western head of Kuwait Bay, known for the mud-brick Red Fort, scene of a 1920 battle, and as the gateway to the northern desert.

Kuwait is effectively one continuous conurbation around Kuwait Bay and down the southern coast, so the metropolitan figure covers most of the population; Al Jahra is the only sizeable separate town.

When to go to Kuwait

Best time: **Nov–Mar.**

Jan

Feb

Mar

Apr

May

Jun

Jul

Aug

Sep

Oct

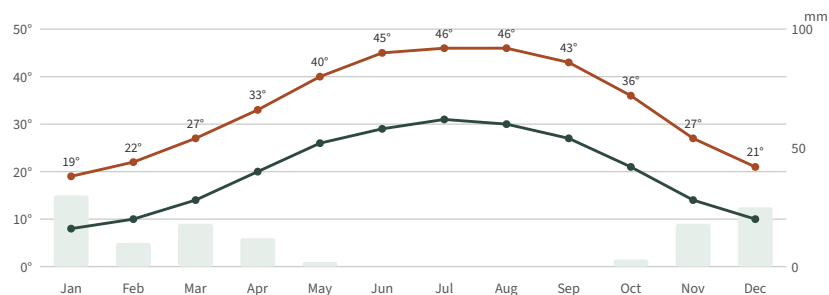
Nov

Dec

■ Best ■ Good ■ Mixed ■ Poor

Average climate in Kuwait City

— High °C — Low °C ■ Rain (mm)



Festivals & events

Feb	National and Liberation Days On 25 and 26 February, National Day and Liberation Day, marking the end of the 1990–91 occupation, bring flags, fireworks, car parades and exuberant water-balloon battles along the Gulf Road.
Feb–Mar	Gergean In the middle of Ramadan, children in traditional dress go door to door singing for sweets and nuts; malls and hotels hold Gergean events that visitors can join.

How much does Kuwait cost?

SHOESTRING £70 per person / day ≈ KWD 28.82 hostels, street food, buses	MID-RANGE £150 per person / day ≈ KWD 61.76 3-star hotels, restaurants, some taxis	COMFORTABLE £300 per person / day ≈ KWD 124 4-star+, guided trips, private transfers
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Estimates per person per day, excluding flights. Prices vary by season and city.

Food to try

Machboos Kuwait's national dish: long-grain rice cooked in a spiced broth with chicken or lamb, loomi dried limes and baharat, topped with fried onions and raisins.	Mutabbaq zubaidi Silver pomfret, the Gulf's most prized fish, fried and served on a bed of spiced rice; a Kuwaiti signature at seafood restaurants.	Gers ogaily A light, fragrant sponge cake flavoured with saffron and cardamom, traditionally served with Arabic coffee or tea when guests visit.
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Getting around

Kuwait has no railway or metro, so visitors rely on taxis, the Careem app and hire cars. Street taxis and pre-booked call taxis are plentiful; agree the fare before setting off. Public buses are cheap but slow and aimed at commuters. Driving is straightforward on wide ring roads and motorways, though rush-hour traffic is heavy. Ferries cross to Failaka Island.

Practical information

PLUGS & VOLTAGE    G C D 240V — UK plugs fit	EMERGENCY NUMBERS Telephone: 112 (ambulance, fire, police) Source: FCDO “Getting help”
DIALLING CODE +965	TIME ZONE UTC+3 (standard time)
TAP WATER Varies — bottled or filtered is safer	DRIVING On the right
TIPPING Restaurants sometimes add a service charge; otherwise leave around 10%. Rounding up taxi fares and small tips for hotel porters are appreciated.	

ETIQUETTE

Alcohol is illegal. Dress modestly in public, avoid public displays of affection, and during Ramadan don't eat, drink or smoke in public in daylight. Use your right hand to give and receive.

MAIN AIRPORTS

Kuwait International Airport (KWI), Kuwait City

Visas & entry for Kuwait

Shown for a British passport.

Visa required — apply before you go

You must have a visa to visit Kuwait.

From the UK government's FCDO entry requirements for British passport holders — read the full page for passport validity, permits and exceptions.

Health & vaccinations

See a travel health nurse, GP or travel clinic **6–8 weeks before you go**. Make sure routine UK vaccinations (such as MMR and diphtheria-tetanus-polio) are up to date.

RECOMMENDED FOR MOST TRAVELLERS

Tetanus

SOMETIMES ADVISED — DEPENDS ON YOUR TRIP, ACTIVITIES AND HEALTH

Hepatitis B Measles Rabies Typhoid

YELLOW FEVER CERTIFICATE

No yellow fever certificate is required to enter.

MALARIA

No malaria risk

Source: TravelHealthPro (National Travel Health Network and Centre), checked 21 October 2026. This is a summary, not medical advice.

Public holidays in Kuwait

The next 12 months. Banks, offices and some sights may close, and transport and hotels get busy around these dates.

Fri 1 Jan 2027	New Year's Day
Tue 5 Jan 2027	Isra' and Mi'raj (date may shift)
Thu 25 Feb 2027	National Day
Fri 26 Feb 2027	Liberation Day
Tue 9 Mar 2027	Eid al-Fitr (date may shift)
Wed 10 Mar 2027	Eid al-Fitr Holiday (date may shift)
Thu 11 Mar 2027	Eid al-Fitr Holiday (date may shift)
Sat 15 May 2027	Day of Arafah (date may shift)

Sun 16 May 2027	Eid al-Adha (date may shift)
Mon 17 May 2027	Eid al-Adha Holiday (date may shift)
Tue 18 May 2027	Eid al-Adha Holiday (date may shift)
Sun 6 Jun 2027	Islamic New Year (date may shift)
Sat 14 Aug 2027	Prophet's Birthday (date may shift)

National holidays only. Dates based on lunar calendars can move by a day or two depending on official announcements.

Useful phrases in Arabic

ENGLISH	ARABIC	SAY IT
Hello	السلام عليكم	<i>as-sa-LAAM a-LAY-kum</i>
Thank you	شكراً	<i>SHOOK-ran</i>
Please	من فضلك	<i>min FAD-lak</i>
Excuse me	لو سمحت	<i>law sa-MAHT</i>
How much is this?	بكم هذا؟	<i>BI-kam HAA-dha</i>

Know before you go

Alcohol is completely banned, including in hotels, and bringing any into the country is an offence, so don't pack even a single duty-free bottle.

The weekend is Friday and Saturday. Many sights and shops open late on Fridays, after midday prayers, so check opening hours before planning a Friday itinerary.

Avoid June to September if you can: daytime highs regularly pass 45°C and outdoor sightseeing becomes impractical, though malls and museums are heavily air-conditioned.

Visa, health and safety rules change. Before you book or travel, check the FCDO travel advice (gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice) and TravelHealthPro (travelhealthpro.org.uk). Costs are estimates. © 2026 Pick My Trip.