



Bahrain

بحرين

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Best Places to Stay

- ➔ Fraser Suites Diplomatic Area (p58)
- ➔ Domain (p58)
- ➔ Palace Boutique Hotel (p58)
- ➔ Novotel Al Dana Resort (p59)

Best Places to Eat

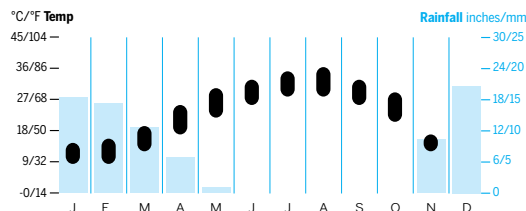
- ➔ Haji Gahwa (p62)
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- ➔ Fish House (p63)

Why Go?

Like an oyster, Bahrain has a rough exterior that takes some prising open, but it's always worth the effort. Manama may lack the finesse of other Gulf capitals, but that's key to its appeal. The storied location of ancient Dilmun and the epicentre of the Gulf's pearling past – Bahrain has a history to reflect on with pride. There's even a cheeky claim that it was home to the Garden of Eden. Nowadays the country has its own Formula 1 Grand Prix, a growing art and foodie scene frequented by Manama's sizeable expat population, and all the hallmarks of wealth, modern Arabian-style. Bahrain's confidence may have been shaken by the uncertain aftermath of the Arab Spring, but its appeal endures, and the lack of visitors means you may have it all to yourself.

When to Go

Bahrain



Oct–Mar Bask in the relative cool of a Gulf winter with daily blue skies.

Apr Join the fast lane during the Formula 1 Grand Prix and enjoy dancing at the Heritage Festival.

May–Sep Extreme heat; stay away if you can.

Daily Costs

Bahrain is an expensive destination, not least because budget accommodation is not recommended for Western visitors. Expect to pay at least US\$100 for a comfortable room. Cheaper eating options are easier to find (starting from US\$5), and with free access to many of the main sites of interest, a minimum daily cost with transport comes to around US\$140. This rises to US\$200 if you're staying in midrange hotels; for a top-end hotel with car hire, a starting point of US\$350 is nearer the mark.

ITINERARIES

One Day

Enjoy the juxtaposition of ancient and modern at the **Bahrain National Museum** and the adjacent Bahrain National Theatre, before wandering around the real thing in the wind-tower residences of neighbouring **Muharraq**. Explore the giant **Al Fatih Mosque**, then stop for lunch at **Coco's** and a pastry at **Café Lilou** over in chic Adliya. Shop for perfumes, ice cream and gold in **Manama Souq** before having dinner at **Haji Gahwa**.

Three Days

After allowing day one for Manama, spend day two with the dead at **Bahrain Fort** and **Sar**. Admire the continuity with the ancient in the crafts of **Al Jasra**, wonder whether this is paradise at the **Tree of Life**, and complete the burial circuit at **A'Ali** for sunset. On day three, visit the **Oil Museum**, pump up the pace with a trip to the **Formula 1 Racetrack**, then slow things down at nearby **Al Areen Wildlife Park & Reserve**. If one of the days is Friday, make sure you're in Manama for a famous Bahrain brunch.

Essential Food & Drink

- ➔ **Makbous** Rice and spices with chicken, lamb or fish in a rich sauce.
- ➔ **Rangena** Coconut cake.
- ➔ **Khabees** Dates in a variety of sizes, colours and states of ripeness.
- ➔ **Tap water** Safe to drink, although most people stick to bottled water.
- ➔ **Alcohol** Widely available, with some excellent hotel cocktail bars.

AT A GLANCE

- ➔ **Currency** Bahraini dinar (BD)
- ➔ **Mobile Phones** SIM cards widely available.
- ➔ **Money** ATMs widespread; credit cards widely accepted.
- ➔ **Visas** Available on arrival for many nationalities.

Fast Facts

- ➔ **Capital** Manama
- ➔ **Country Code** 973
- ➔ **Languages** Arabic, English
- ➔ **Population** 1,346,613

Exchange Rates

For current exchange rates, see www.xe.com.

Australia	A\$10	BD2.79
Euro zone	€10	BD4.14
Kuwait	KD1	BD1.25
Oman	OR1	BD0.98
Qatar	QR10	BD1.04
Saudi Arabia	SR10	BD1.01
UAE	Dh10	BD1.03
UK	UK£10	BD5.35
USA	US\$10	BD3.77

Resources

- ➔ **Bahrain Tourism** (www.culture.gov.bh) Official site.
- ➔ **Clickbahrain** (www.clickbahrain.com) Privately run island guide.
- ➔ **Lonely Planet** (www.lonelyplanet.com/bahrain) Comprehensive coverage of the island.