



Kuwait الكويت

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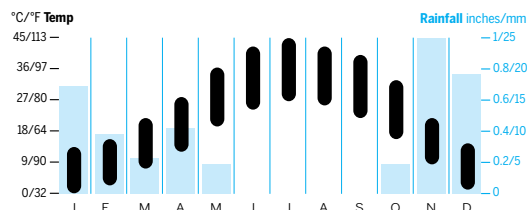
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Why Go?

Kuwait, in the cradle of one of the most ancient and contested corners of the world, has a certain cachet. For a start, it may be just as oil rich as other Gulf countries, but it hasn't gone for the glitz and glamour in quite the same way – perhaps it's the years lost to the Iraqi invasion and its aftermath, or maybe it's a conscious decision not to sell its soul to the gods of commercialism. And Kuwait lies just far enough away from those self-same Gulf travel hubs to the south to mean that tourists and expats are fewer here. The result? A more authentically Arab feel to the country. At the same time, Kuwait remains an oasis in a land of desert plains, and has excellent museums, a fine souq and a corniche of combed beaches and lively restaurants. It all adds up to what could be the Gulf's most intriguing destination.

When to Go

Kuwait



Nov–Jan Experience the relief of cool evenings after the burning heat of summer.

Feb Pick up a bargain in Kuwait's Hala shopping festival.

Mar & Apr During spring, the desert is laced in a gossamer of lime green.

Daily Costs

Kuwait is an expensive country to visit. With budget accommodation from US\$100, cheap options for eating (around US\$20) and museum admission charges, a minimum daily cost with transport comes in at around US\$200. This rises to US\$350 if you stay in midrange hotels, or US\$450 for a top-end hotel with car hire.

ITINERARIES

One Day

Potter along the **corniche** (Arabian Gulf St), pausing at **Layali Al Helmeiya** for a *sheesha* and **Kuwait Towers** for that quintessential Kuwait photo. Get a feel for the country's Bedouin history at **Al Sadu House**, take lunch in a heritage house at **Beit 7**, then enjoy the rich Al Sabah collection at **Dar Al Athar Al Islamiyya**. Sample local desserts in the city's most traditional souq, **Souq Marbarakia**, and return to the water (or dry dock, to be exact) for dinner on the dhow at **Al Boom**.

Two Days

After day one exploring the corniche, head inland on day two to **Tareq Rajab Museum** – a hidden gem of a collection displaying ethnographic treasures from across the Islamic world. Spend the afternoon shopping in fashionable **Salimiya** district, followed by talking to the animals at the excellent **Scientific Center**. End the day enjoying the bustle of promenading locals at nearby **Marina Crescent**, followed by dinner at **Mais Alghanim**.

Three Days

Spare a thought for the events of the past two decades by visiting the diminished **National Museum**, sense the still-smarting wounds of war in the **Kuwait House of National Works: Memorial Museum** and drive out to Al Jahra's **Mutla Ridge**. Brighten up a sobering day at the **Hilton Kuwait Resort**, on a silky stretch of coastline with sequined waters, or get away from it all on **Failaka Island**.

AT A GLANCE

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

Fast Facts

- ➔ **Capital** Kuwait City
- ➔ **Country code** 965
- ➔ **Language** Arabic; English
- ➔ **Population** 2.79 million

Exchange Rates

Australia	A\$10	KD2.19
Bahrain	BD1	KD0.81
Euro zone	€10	KD3.34
Oman	OR1	KD0.79
Qatar	QR10	KD0.83
Saudi Arabia	SR10	KD0.81
UAE	Dh1	KD0.82
UK	UK£10	KD4.64
USA	US\$10	KD3.03

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

Resources

- ➔ **Bazaar** (www.bazaar.town) The best of the expat and visitor resources.
- ➔ **Visit Kuwait** (www.visitkuwait.com) Excellent site for attractions to practicalities.
- ➔ **Arab Times** (www.arabtimesonline.com) Online version of local newspaper.

Essential Food & Drink

- ➔ **Baked fish** Blended with coriander, turmeric, red pepper and cardamom.
- ➔ **Hamour or pomfret** White fish stuffed with parsley, onions and dill.
- ➔ **Gulf prawns** Available late autumn and early winter.
- ➔ **Alcohol** Not available or permissible.
- ➔ **Mixed-fruit cocktails** Served in rainbow combinations.
- ➔ **Tap water** Safe to drink, although most people stick to bottled water.