

KUWAIT

Dry desert; intensely hot summers; short, cool winters. Natural hazards : sudden cloudbursts are common from October to April; they bring heavy rain which can, in some rare cases, damage roads and houses; sandstorms and dust storms occur throughout the year, but are most common between March and August. Temperatures range from 15 Deg. C in Dec to as high as 50 Deg. C in Aug.

CULTURE

The Kuwaiti culture, just like many other Arabian cultures, takes great pride in hospitality. Guests in people homes are treated with great warmth and respect. Host exhibit their polished manners and expect the same back from their guest while conversing and setting a good example from their behaviors.

Kuwaitis traditionally greet each other by shaking hands and kissing cheeks. However, men and women do not exchange more than a possible handshake to greet each other in respect unless the man and the woman are related to one another. It is also customary for people greeting each other to ask a long series of questions concerning one's health, that of their relatives, their jobs, etc., such as asking how good they are feeling in order to relax the other person and give a sense of intimacy. Usually, elders are greeted first as a sign of respect.

Hospitality in Kuwait is often portrayed through the serving of tea and coffee. It is very uncommon for a guest to enter a house, office, or even some stores without being offered tea or coffee. In Kuwaiti Bedouin custom, a guest's refusal of tea, coffee, or such offerings is sometimes viewed as insulting by the host, as it is as if the guest is denying the host's efforts of being hospitable and generous. Common types of teas that are served include chai, black tea, green tea, peppermint, lemon, and chamomile. The tea is prepared in a kettle and brought up to a boil before being served. Sometimes, the black tea is prepared with cardamom; also, milk may be added as a subsidiary to sugar. The hot drinks are usually accompanied by a selection of nuts or sweets such as baklava, and later, possibly a cold drink.

Food plays a large part in Kuwaiti culture. The national dish of Kuwait known as machboos (Arabic: مكبوس) consists mainly of mutton, chicken, or fish placed over or mixed in a large mass of well-cooked and prepared rice. Food is almost always prepared and served in large amounts, and it is extremely common for households to invite guests over to share meals.

RELIGION

The Constitution provides for "absolute freedom" of belief and for freedom of religious practice in accordance with established customs, provided that it does not conflict with public policy or morals; however, the Government placed some limits on the right of free religious practice. The Constitution states that Islam is the state religion and that Shari'a (Islamic law) is a main source of legislation. Freedom of belief was respected and the Government did not intervene in worship services.

Alcohol and pork are not legal and may not be imported into the country.

Alcohol is strictly illegal in Kuwait: it may not be imported, manufactured or served.

Possessing alcohol will get you into a lot of trouble. Therefore, to keep it locked safely in the Bonded Store or in a locker which might not attract the attention of Authorities.

CURRENCY

The national currency is the Kuwaiti dinar (KD, KWD). The dinar is the highest valued currency unit in the world.

The dinar is divided into 1000 fils. Notes are available in denominations of KD 20, 10, 5, 1, ½ and ¼, while 100, 50, 20, 10 and 5 fils coins are also available. While notes have Latin numerals on one side, the coins are entirely in Arabic.

DRINKING WATER

Tap water is drinkable, although most of it is desalinated and not particularly tasty, and in summertime, you may have a hard time telling apart the hot and cold taps. Bottled water is available everywhere for a few hundred fils.

CRIME

The crime threat in Kuwait is assessed as low. Violent crimes are rare. Kuwaiti drivers can also be quite reckless.

CLOTHING

Kuwait adopts a live-and-let-live policy for clothing, and you'll see a wide range of styles: women wear anything ranging from daring designer fashions to head-to-toe black abayas with headscarves and veils, while men can be seen both in T-shirts and shorts or the traditional dazzling white dishdashah. To avoid unnecessary attention, though, women will want to steer clear of short skirts or low necklines. Bikinis are fine at the hotel pool, but not on public beaches.



CAUTION

Do not eat or smoke in public during the holy month of Ramadan or you may be fined or even go to jail. The fine is 100 KD or about US\$369.

Do not get into conversations concerning the Emir of Kuwait. Although Kuwait is a relatively democratic country with one of the best freedom of speech laws in the Middle East, the topic of the Emir is beyond the red line.

Photographing government and public buildings, military installations, and economic infrastructure, particularly that related to the oil industry, is against the law and can result in arrest, investigation, and prosecution. Also, some traditionally-dressed women find being photographed to be offensive and may complain to the local police. If photographing public scenes or persons, visitors should take care not to inadvertently cause offense that could lead to an official complaint to the authorities.

The use of Camera is strictly prohibited at the Port.

Even though Crew can keep the Cameras / Mobile Phones in their hand inside the Ship, they have to remember not to take any photos of the Port or it's facilities openly which might attract the attention of CID or Police who might be in the area during that time.

Humiliating a person, a police officer, or a public official is a crime in Kuwait. A person charged with humiliating another is subject to police investigation and possible prosecution. Persons under investigation can be prevented from departing Kuwait.

Persons violating Kuwaiti laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Kuwait are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines.

PHONE

The country code for Kuwait is 965. Local phone numbers are 8 digits long. The numbering system is as follows: Numbers starting with 2 are landline telephones. Numbers starting with 5 are mobile telephones for the VIVA Mobile Operator. Numbers starting with 6 are mobile telephones for the WATANIYA Mobile Operator. Numbers starting with 9 are mobile telephones for the ZAIN Mobile Operator.