

A considerable number of Saudis have lived and studied in the United States and Europe. Those who had favorable experiences have become more tolerant of Western ways. Those who had problems have become hardened in their biases.

**3. Restaurants and Hotels** Most quality restaurants in Saudi Arabia are operated by non-Saudis and cater mainly to foreigners who work in the country. Thus, they are "foreign" restaurants serving mainly non-native food and have menus in both Arabic and English. The prices can be very high, with evening meals usually costing 20 dollars or more. Unless a surcharge has been added to the bill, tipping is expected, with 15% being the norm. You will discover that your mess hall serves food which is just as good and costs only about one-eighth as much.

Probably the best and most interesting meal to have in Saudi Arabia is the traditional Saudi or Bedouin-type meal which consists of roasted meat, rice, and fruit--all served on huge platters placed in front of you. Such meals are not served in restaurants, but rather in private homes and at outdoor gatherings, and you must be invited to them.



Besides the restaurants, there are also numerous fast-food establishments in Riyadh--another consequence of modernization. Some bear the name of their American affiliates. Others have local renown like Herfi, which is the main burger chain. In any case, one finds many establishments which sell burgers (made from lamb), hotdogs, pizzas, and sandwiches. For enthusiasts of Arab culture, it's best to seek advice from an experienced "Saudi hand" before taking meals at such establishments. They might have inadequate kitchen hygiene, poor quality food, or both.

There is likewise a wide range of hotels in Riyadh. The top rated ones provide excellent service and amenities, although their rates are very expensive. Some of them serve as meeting places for local and foreign businessmen. The

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lower rated hotels do not normally attract Americans, as they

are often lacking in cleanliness, sanitation, or kitchen hygiene.

**4. Shopping** Shopping in Riyadh has taken on many new dimensions in the past decade. Besides the old market areas, the city now has numerous modern markets for groceries and general merchandise as well as a few shopping malls with specialty shops of all kinds.



Along with urban modernization, the tradition of bargaining for price has in most cases disappeared. The traditional regard for religious duty has, however, persisted. All stores and shops close during prayer time, which lasts about 15 to 20 minutes. In larger establishments, non-Muslim customers may remain inside, although they are actually locked-in. Depending on the time of year, the morning shopping is interrupted once, and the evening shopping twice. As elsewhere in the region, Saudi markets are closed in the afternoon.

The markets of Riyadh offer a wide variety of merchandise, although nearly all finished goods are imports. One can purchase good quality video, stereo, and camera equipment at reasonable prices.

Home computerware is likewise readily available and relatively inexpensive, since Saudi merchants import IBM clones and compatible peripherals. Western clothing is abundant but varies widely in quality. The well-made items are overpriced. The cheaper items are generally not worth buying because they lack durability.



Among traditional Middle Eastern goods, copperwares are priced much like clothing. As for Oriental rugs, Saudi Arabia is not a good place to buy them--contrary to popular

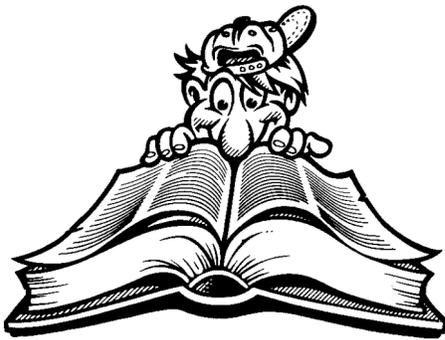
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belief. The high quality products cost more than they do in England and other countries. Expatriates were at one time

able to buy excellent rugs from religious pilgrims who would be transiting the Kingdom. However, local merchants have since intervened to stop that practice.

In contrast, gold jewelry is a particularly good buy in Saudi Arabia. Besides the traditional "gold souk," there are jewelry shops in various parts of Riyadh. One can select from a wide variety of well-crafted pieces most of which consist of twenty karat gold. The price per ounce is set by the government. However, the added value of the workmanship leaves room for haggling, and one can still bargain over the price of gold jewelry.



There are a number of large book stores in Riyadh. These sell a wide variety of English-language publications—books (fiction, non-fiction, and reference), manuals, magazines, newspapers, and maps. Some have order departments; however, certain titles are proscribed. The whole publishing industry is subjected to censorship.

Books are banned, and magazine articles are censored, if their contents are deemed to be morally or politically objectionable.

There are modern supermarkets in almost every part of Riyadh. These carry fresh meat, produce, and dairy products as well as a wide variety of American and European food products--in cans, jars, and packages, both dried and frozen. Prices for comparable items are generally higher than they are in America.

Although you may have commissaries and PXs in which to shop, you or your wife will find it interesting to browse through the local stores for food or souvenirs. You will find many small food markets in which to shop, and in cities such as Riyadh, Jidda and Khobar (near Dhahran), you will be able to shop in supermarkets. You should have no trouble finding interesting items to buy as souvenirs; there will be so many! Bargaining is accepted in most of the smaller shops, but is not done in supermarkets. Local fresh produce is quite reasonable; however, as in most countries, imported goods are always very expensive. Check on restrictions by

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Saudi Arabia of removing antiques and other items from the country.



## 5. Telephone, Telegraph and Mail Service

Telephone service in Saudi Arabia is generally good, especially within and between major cities. Government housing complexes have telephones. Otherwise, the availability of service varies.

Residents of some newer parts of Riyadh have had to wait months for lines to be laid in their area. The traveler will find ample phones at the airport terminals and also at intervals along the main highways. Depending on the facility, it may be possible to make direct and long distance calls. When operator assistance is required, there may be some delay in getting through. Calls are billed on a usage basis, and bills must be paid promptly to preclude termination of service. However, Saudi Arabia has just completed an intra-kingdom telephone system in which anyone can call within the country on a commercial phone. Also, commercial, direct dial calls from the United States are available to a Saudi resident phone.

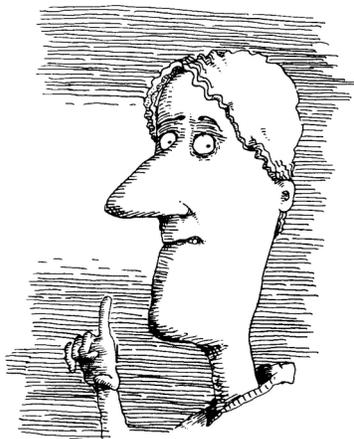
There is good commercial telegraph service between Saudi Arabia and the United States. For official business, telex service is available at the Embassy and the Consulates General in Jidda and Dhahran.

APO mail service is available to all U.S. Embassy staff members and their dependents. It takes seven to ten days for delivery of letters and packages sent either to or from the United States. Even so, this service is slightly faster than international mail service, which may also be used. All mail--even APO--is subject to Saudi customs inspections. Therefore, problems may arise if one is an addressee for contraband or black-listed materials. Aside from mail services, the State Department pouch may be used for shipment of prescription medicines, eye glasses, and other health items.

**6. Domestic Help** The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia did not abolish slavery until 1962. Prior to that time, the wealthier Saudis used slaves to perform menial household chores and to assist in minding children. Such functions subsequently passed to foreigners employed as domestic servants—mostly people from poor countries, such as Egypt, Sudan, Somalia, Ethiopia, Yemen, Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, and the Philippines.



Male domestics are usually employed as drivers, gardeners, or houseboys. The latter attend to cleaning, washing and ironing clothes, cooking, and preparing tea and coffee. Female domestics are usually employed as maids or baby-sitters. Some household servants have live-in accommodations, that is, separate rooms within the courtyard of the residence. Others come and go as required. Domestic servants are not treated "as Kin" unless they have worked for the same family for a considerable length of time.



Wherever you are stationed in Saudi Arabia, you may be provided with a male servant who will clean your quarters and perform small jobs which you might request. He will usually come in the morning and leave as soon as his work is done. Except for a few Saudis who work in the Dhahran area, most of these servants are from Yemen, the Sudan, Pakistan, or Thailand.

**7. Home Security** Except for driving hazards, Saudi Arabia is one of the safest countries in the world. The incidence of crime is very low. Terrorism has become more of a problem in recent years. However, the most serious

incidents have occurred in and around Mecca and on the opposite side of the peninsula, in the Eastern Province. Riyadh has not been seriously threatened, nor have any Americans been targeted.

There have been some rare incidents of invasion of home privacy. These usually involve Arab men watching or otherwise harassing Western women. The women themselves can thwart such voyeurs and prowlers by locking the outer doors of the house or apartment, drawing the drapes over the windows, and calling the local security guard.



## 8. Entertainment and Recreation

As Saudi life conforms to the strictures of Wahhabi Islam, there are no public cinemas, theaters, opera houses, or concert halls in the Kingdom.

American, British, and other European expatriates have from time to time organized musical and theatrical groups, and these have performed at various foreign-managed compounds in and around Riyadh. Some government programs offer diversion, but mainly for enthusiasts of archeology and folk culture. The Museum of Antiquities in central Riyadh is worth visiting, as are the various "open" archeological sites throughout the Kingdom. In contrast, the Bedouin Culture Exhibit, located to the east of Riyadh, appears very artificial.



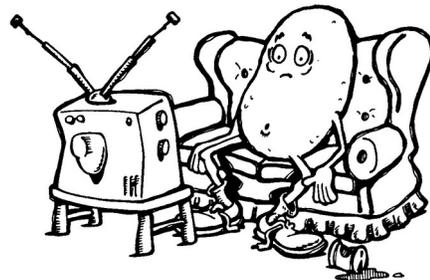
For radio entertainment, one can pickup various English broadcasts in Riyadh. The English service of the Saudi radio system broadcasts six hours daily, offering news, music, features, and talk shows. The English radio service in neighboring Bahrain offers similar programming for 14 hours daily. Although reception is not always good, Voice of America, Armed Forces Radio, and BBC can also be heard.

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The Saudi television network telecasts on a European standard. American standard TV sets will not pick-up the signal; however, multisystem sets can be purchased locally. Saudi TV operates one channel in Arabic and one in English. The Arabic channel offers news, religious programs, talk shows, some sports, educational features, cartoons dubbed in Arabic, and some movies--mostly of the Walt Disney type.

The English channel offers similar family-oriented programs--cartoons, situation comedies, and special features. All programs are censored in accordance with the Kingdom's strict moral code. Only a few current American TV shows and movies are allowed for public viewing.



Home video entertainment has become very popular in Saudi Arabia. Shops in Riyadh sell a wide variety of recorders, and there are video rental outlets in many parts of the city. It is not advisable to bring in tapes through the airport unless one has time to spend on the premises. All tapes are reviewed as part of customs clearance. It is possible to avoid such inconvenience by using the State Department pouch, which is authorized for shipment of video tapes.

For Americans in Riyadh, tennis and swimming are probably the most popular recreational sports. There are tennis courts at the U.S. Embassy, Office of the Project Manager--Saudi Arabian National Guard (OPM-SANG) and Joint Economic Commission Riyadh (JECOR) compounds and also at numerous private recreational facilities. Serious players can join the Riyadh Tennis League and participate in tournaments throughout the year.



Swimming pools are numerous, being located at recreation centers, residence compounds, and villas. Despite the lack

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of deep water, there is a scuba club in Riyadh which arranges for training and periodic dives at Jidda.

As for other American pastimes, jogging can be problematic. Some natives are contemptuous of the activity, while others are offended at the sight of scantily-clad people. It is best to stay away from traffic and wear full length jogging suits—at least within the city. Equestrian enthusiasts can go horseback riding or take riding lessons at Riyadh stables. For less demanding exercise, one can choose bowling or golf. There are numerous bowling alleys in the Riyadh area and leagues sponsored by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and JECOR. There is an 18-hole golf course located near the airport, and its club membership fees are relatively inexpensive. Regarding team sports, one can participate in organized basketball, softball, and volleyball leagues. There are few spectator sports in the Kingdom—mostly soccer matches and horse races.

Clearly, the biggest event is the annual camel race, which is held at a site east of Riyadh.

Many Westerners enjoy making day trips or camping in the semi-desert areas around Riyadh. An organization called the desert Ramblers meets regularly to exchange information on desert travel and arrange outings. The land of inner Arabia is not without natural beauty or diversion. One can climb the escarpment to the east of Riyadh or search for fossils, "desert diamonds" (which are actually quartz crystals), or ancient inscriptions on rocks. Some large water holes in the Riyadh area serve as picnic sites. Other attractions include the oasis area of al-Kharj and the old (now ruined) Saudi stronghold of Diriyya.

Like entertainment, group social activity in Riyadh is rather limited. There are some organizations which do promote such endeavors. The Riyadh International Women's Group, for example, sponsors coffees, luncheons, and evening affairs. It also provides information on cooking, gardening, and other such pastimes.



For children, there are movie matinees on Thursday and Friday afternoons at the JECOR, OPM-SANG, and Corps of Engineers compounds.

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**9. Conclusion** The above guidelines are...more or less... true, just as the American tendency to "get straight down to business" is more or less true. We have learned only the American options. There are many other equally viable options. We have to keep this in mind when associating with other people in the world.

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**a. Areas of Adjustment** The newly arriving attaché can quickly become alienated by the strangeness of Saudi Arabia. Aside from differences in architecture, customs, and clothing, he will be affected by many subtle impressions that life is not the same as he knew it. His work week begins on Saturday, Thursday and Friday being the weekend. He hears the Islamic call to prayer broadcast five times daily, yet he finds no church in the Kingdom. Moreover, Christmas and Easter are not among the official holidays. When in search of entertainment, he finds no baseball parks, football stadiums, movie theaters, nightclubs, or casinos.



Such experiences are disconcerting and may eventually lead to extreme resentment of the natives and their lifestyle. To preclude that development, one should stay busy at work and spend leisure time on something familiar and satisfying, that is, a hobby or some other pastime.

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In other words, do not allow time for negative thoughts about life in the Kingdom. As the weeks and months go by, the once strange milieu becomes more familiar and less unsettling.

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**b. Culture Shock** Be alert for culture shock systems in yourself and others around you. When someone starts swearing at others, saying they are too stupid to learn, or crude people...culture shock is there. That person is having difficulty "getting through" to people using his own learned pattern and has not adapted his patterns.

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While stationed in Saudi Arabia, it is a good idea to find a hobby and cultivate it, since the country has few tourist attractions and little opportunity for entertainment. You may well be stationed in a place, such as Riyadh or Dhahran, where there are many facilities set up to meet the needs of American service personnel.

But, on the other hand, you might end up in an area where there are few, if any, Americans and limited recreational facilities. In such a case, a hobby will greatly help pass the time.



## Review Quiz: Community and Homelife

**Fill in the blanks** Fill in the blanks with the most correct word listed at the bottom. Not all words listed will be used.

When in public in Saudi Arabia, it is inappropriate to demonstrate (1) \_\_\_\_\_ for a sponsor or friend of the opposite sex. Also, openly expressing (2) \_\_\_\_\_ or cursing can be grounds for incarceration.

Pet (3) \_\_\_\_\_ are considered unclean according to Muslim law.

In Saudi Arabian society, age is considered a sign of (4) \_\_\_\_\_, respect and (5) \_\_\_\_\_. Older people are listened to and asked to give advice.

Saudi religious morality (6) \_\_\_\_\_ enforce Islamic mores within society.

Many Saudis associate the (7) \_\_\_\_\_ with the "evil eye." Do not photograph (8) \_\_\_\_\_, (9) \_\_\_\_\_ and government/military installations.

Saudi attitudes to Americans could best be described as (10) \_\_\_\_\_.

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camera  
airports

dignity  
ambivalent

anger  
hostile

post offices  
affection

police

wisdom

dogs

cats



"Great leaders produce great subordinates, who, in turn, become great leaders in their own time...Your legacy will be the men and women you touch. We will all be judged by our successes and our successors' successes. We will be judged by how well they fight, and whether in fact they protect and defend this Republic...The single most important contribution we make is in developing our subordinates. Our enduring legacy to the Army and the nation is the training of tomorrow's leaders."

General Gordon R. Sullivan