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Cover photography by Diane Peterson

The State of Kuwait

Area, Geography, & Climate

Kuwait is located in the northeastern corner of the Arabian Peninsula. It is bounded on the north and west by Iraq, on the south by Saudi Arabia and on the east by the Arabian Gulf. The coastline is 290 kilometers (181 miles) long and the total land area is about 7,780 square miles, slightly smaller than New Jersey. Kuwait's territorial waters cover an area approximately 2,200 square miles.

The country is a sandy, riverless desert interspersed with small hills. Vegetation is sparse. Physically the land is mainly flat desert, the highest point being Muttla Ridge, which runs along the north coast of Kuwait Bay. There are nine islands off the Kuwait coast, but only Failaka Island is inhabited.

Kuwait has a desert climate typical of the region, which indicates wide temperature ranges, little rainfall, and dust storms from March through August. Summer (April-October) temperatures often exceed 120 degrees Fahrenheit. The weather is hot, especially in July and August when shade temperatures can reach 110°-115°. Periods of high humidity occur, but during the hottest months (June, July, and August), humidity levels range from 45 to 50%. Humidity is generally low in comparison with the rest of the Gulf.

From November to April the days will be warm, averaging from 55°-70°F, with cooler evening temperatures. During winter (December and January), clear, sunny days are common but the temperature can fall to the frost point at night, and warm clothing is necessary. The annual rainfall of approximately 5 inches usually occurs at this time.

The hottest areas of the country are in Kuwait City and within the vicinity of the airport. Ahmadi and Failaka Island enjoy cooler weather due to sea breezes.

Greater Kuwait City extends 15 miles along the Bay of Kuwait and a similar distance down the coast of the Arabian Gulf, where a succession of smaller towns comprise a growing metropolitan area where most Kuwaitis live. It is the most important city in the State of Kuwait. The old city outgrew its mud walls with the advent of the country's oil prosperity in the late 1950's, though a few gates have been preserved as historical monuments. The city has continued to expand along the coast, and new suburban communities have grown up adjacent to it. In contrast to the flat, arid countryside are ever changing colors of the sea and green areas of trees, flowers, and grass in the city and the older suburbs.

Wildlife

Kuwait is a stopping point for migrating birds because of its position at the top of the Arabian Gulf. In the spring and autumn, birds such as the Cormorant, Tern, Wagtail, and even the greater Flamingo have been seen on the wadis and mud flats. Unfortunately the few remaining birds that do nest on Bubiyan and Kubbar Islands are being wiped out by poaching and vandalism. Several reptiles inhabit the desert. Monitor lizards are perhaps the most impressive, some reaching more than a meter in length. The poisonous Boigine Viper and the shiny "Sand Fish" skink are also to be found.



The most notorious desert dweller is the scorpion, but being nocturnal creatures they are not often seen. The long-legged Camel-spider and the fast-digging Dung Beetle also make the desert their home. The desert fox, gerbils and desert hares are mammals that have successfully adapted to desert life and may be seen in Kuwait. Of course, you may also see a camel or two.

During the winter rainfalls plants from Geranium, Pea, Daisy and Plantain families can be found. Vegetation is more apparent in the North where the proximity of high ridge of land and the sea produces catchment areas of water. In some wadis the Oleander shrub is seen and the presence of the Milkweed plant is often an indication of an underground water source.



History of Kuwait and Surrounding Areas

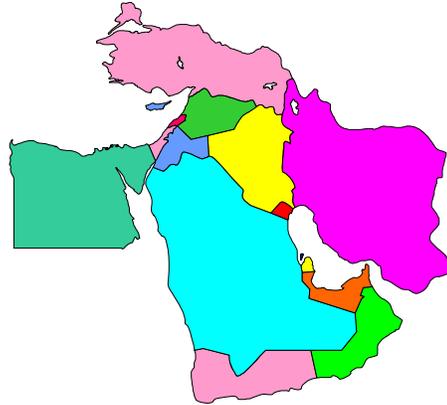
Excavations on Failaka Island unearthed a Bronze Age settlement; this is suggested as the starting point of Kuwait's history.

Strong evidence for this theory is provided by some tablets, dating from 325 BC, which recorded the lifestyle on the Island. Following a visit from Alexander the Great's Admiral Nearclus, the island was named Ikares, after a Greek island in the Aegean Sea.

Kuwait was an important trading center with the Orient, China, Africa and India. The latter was a particularly important link. In the early days, before high-speed travel and communications, Kuwaitis with business interests in India would often keep a family member there to look after their business. India was a supplier of rice and sugar and also the timber needed to make dhows, the traditional Kuwaiti boats. The Indian Rupee was used as currency until Kuwait's independence in 1961 when the Kuwaiti Dinar became the national currency.

Kuwait was traditionally a pearl diving community. Merchants owning ships would lend divers money with which to sustain their families while the men were at sea. The debts would be repaid from the season's profits. If the June to September season was poor the debts would be carried over and could mount up. Self-employed divers would also work on the merchant's ship, paying him a percentage of their earnings.

The modern State of Kuwait traces its origins to the early 18th century when the Utubi clan of the Anaza tribe settled in the area. As a sign of their influence and the respect with which they were viewed, the Sabah family was elected as the hereditary ruling family. Nominally under the Ottoman Turks, Kuwait became affiliated with Great Britain by treaty in 1899. A British protectorate was established in 1914, but in 1961 Kuwait gained its full sovereignty. From 1752 until the present, there have been thirteen rulers from the Sabah family. The current ruler is His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.



In 1962, the Emir Abdullah Al-Salim Al-Sabah, in association with the Constituent Assembly, promulgated the Constitution of the State of Kuwait. Executive power rests with the Emir, the Head of State, who exercises it through a Council of Ministers under the Prime Minister's leadership. Legislative power rests with a unicameral National Assembly consisting of 50 members elected for four-year terms. Literate, adult Kuwaiti males may vote, excluding members of the armed forces. In 1986, severe internal pressures in Kuwait caused by the Iran-Iraq war led to the National Assembly's dissolution and the suspension of elections, but they were reformed after the Iraqi invasion of 1990-91.

Iraqi invasion and occupation from August 1990 to February 1991 seriously, if not traumatically, affected Kuwaiti life and attitudes. Perhaps more than any of the other Gulf peoples, Kuwaitis are familiar and at home with Western ways, while they are also deeply conscious of their Arabness. The Iraqi invasion, coming from what was regarded as a "brother" Arab state, has of necessity led to a re-evaluation of basic social and political relationships. A feeling of betrayal on the part of Kuwaitis towards many of their fellow Arabs who seemed to sympathize with Iraq has led to serious social cleavages. To some extent, the attitude of Kuwaitis who remained under Iraqi occupation will also be at variance with the attitudes of business acumen and common sense which has tended to avoid all economic, political, religious, and cultural extremes. Kuwaitis in the post-war period have displayed a variety of attitudes on all issues with considerable fervor. Accustomed to more personal freedom than are most of their neighbors, including the freest press in the Arab world, Kuwaitis are unafraid to express themselves forcefully on all issues.

The Rulers of Kuwait

1756-1762: Sabah	1917-1921: Salem
1762-1812: Abdullah	1921-1950: Ahmad
1812-1859: Jaber	1951-1965: Abdullah
1866-1892: Abdullah	1966-1977: Sabah
1892-1896: Mohamed	1977-2006: Jaber
1896-1915: Mubarak	2006: Saad
1915-1917: Jaber	2006-to present: Sabah

Kuwait, independent since 1961, is a Constitutional Monarchy governed by a Hereditary Emirate. The Chief of State is the Emir, currently His Excellency Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, who selects the Prime Minister in consultation



with senior members of the ruling family. By tradition, the Emir's successor, the Crown Prince, also serves as Prime Minister. The ruling family's selection of a Crown Prince is subject to parliamentary approval. Kuwait's Emirs have traditionally governed in consultation with members of several commercially powerful families and other influential community leaders. With the emergence of Kuwait as an economically wealthy state, based initially on its vast oil resources and subsequently on its overseas investments, actual power was increasingly centered in the hands of the ruling Al-Sabah family.

Public Institutions

Kuwait's National Assembly, the seat of Kuwaiti legislative power, has served both to institutionalize traditional consultative participation with the ruling family and to act as an outlet for popular expression. Its 50 popularly elected deputies are chosen by an electorate made up of the approximately 82,000 adult male Kuwaiti citizens who can trace their Kuwaiti ancestry back to 1920. (Kuwait has not granted suffrage to females or "second class" male Kuwaiti citizens.) The entire Cabinet sits in the Assembly ex-officio.

Officially, political parties are banned. Nonetheless, political activity finds an outlet in social clubs and religious societies as well as through family or neighborhood fora, known as "diwaniyyas". A number of political "groupings", both secular and Islamic, act as political parties during elections and in the National Assembly. Labor unions are permitted in several sectors but since they are financed by the Government, seldom act independently.

Kuwait's democracy, albeit limited, is much more open and participatory than are the regimes of its neighbors. In a single generation, oil-related wealth has brought vast changes to the once poor, isolated members of the society. The large expatriate population has also exposed Kuwaitis to numerous social and cultural forces. With its high per capita income, Kuwait has distributed its wealth among the population through education, medical care, housing, and guaranteed employment for citizens.

Population

Foreign nationals comprise approximately 55% of Kuwait's population of 1.4 million. The largest foreign groups are Egyptians, Pakistanis, Bangladeshis, Indians, Syrians, Lebanese and Filipinos. The largest Western community is American (about 6,200), followed by British. French, Germans, and Canadians are also represented. Kuwaiti citizens include recently settled Bedouin and long-established townspeople with antecedents in central Arabia, Iraq, and Iran. This variety of origins is reflected in religion: about 65% of Kuwaitis are Sunni Muslims; the remainder are Shi'ite Muslims. Although Sunnis comprise the ruling elite, many Shi'a have acquired great wealth and the influence money brings.

Arabic is the official language, but English is widely understood and spoken. The literacy rate, estimated at more than 60%, is one of the highest in the Arab world, and exceeds 70% among persons under 30. Population growth is 3.5% for Kuwaiti citizens and 2.8% for non-Kuwaitis.

Kuwait's standard of living approaches that of the most developed Western states in many respects. Most families own a car. Homes of wealthy Kuwaitis are large and, in some cases, palatial. While there are pockets of relative poverty,

Kuwait's generous system of government social programs guarantees a minimum standard of living that is high by Third World standards.



General Information

Workweek & Business Hours

Most government offices are open from 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., Saturday through Thursday. Saturday is the first day of the week. The official weekly day off is Friday, but many businesses stop work on Thursday at noon. Friday is the Islamic day for formal prayer at the mosque, so all government offices and major businesses are closed on Fridays, but convenience stores and groceries will generally be open, as will the traditional markets or souqs. Private sector hours are approximately 7:30/8:00 a.m. – 12:30/1:00 p.m., 3:30/4:00 p.m. – 6:30/7:00 p.m. Hours may vary between individual companies. Shops are open from 8:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. and 4:30 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. These hours may also vary between individual shops and during Ramadan.

Public Holidays

National Day is February 25, and Liberation Day is February 26. New Year's Day (January 1st) is a government holiday and is usually given in the commercial sector. Beginning on National Day, many Kuwaitis make a practice of camping in the desert for two weeks. Primarily a social gathering, it involves sports and nightly festivities.

Currency

The currency is the Kuwaiti Dinar (KD). 1 KD = 1000 fils. There are 1, 5, 10, 20, 50, and 100 fil coins and ¼, ½, 1, 5, 10, and 20 KD bills. The dinar is acceptable and convertible by the International Monetary Fund. There are no restrictions on currency taken in or out of the country. International credit cards are generally accepted by all major businesses.

Common Kuwaiti Customs

Kuwaiti customs vary from one environment to another. It is acceptable to ask when in doubt.

Formal greetings are expressed in the form of handshakes when introductions are made. It is also acceptable for persons of the same gender or, if related to each other, to kiss both cheeks. Arab men are often seen in public hugging or kissing each other in greeting or walking arm in arm or holding hands. Arabs often stand or sit closer than Americans are comfortable with. Persons of the same gender are more likely to touch each other during a normal conversation and may discuss personal subjects with more detail than Americans are used to.

Women, in general, should wait for a man to extend his hand first and should only shake hands with the tips of the fingers, rather than the whole palm of

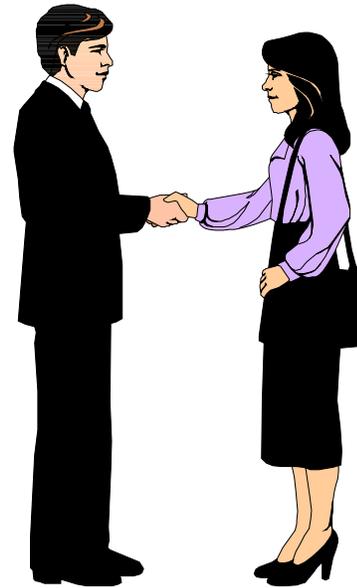
the hand. The palm of the hand is considered an erotic part of the body. Traditional Arabic women will often dye their hands with henna, particularly during Ramadan, as a form of celebration. A woman should therefore not stand or sit with her palms showing as this could be considered a sexual message. Religious men, often notable because they are bearded and wear a shortened dishdasha, usually refrain from shaking a woman's hand.

It is advisable to remove your shoes when entering a Kuwaiti's home, unless asked otherwise and almost always when entering a mosque.

Incense may be offered either upon entry or leaving a traditional Kuwaiti home or celebration. Lean over the source and using small hand movements, waft it towards the face. This is used as a ritual of blessing the guest.

It is considered rude to sit in a chair with legs crossed showing the bottoms of your feet or the soles of your shoes. It is not polite to sit or stand with one's back to another person. You will notice that the seating arrangement in the typical Kuwaiti diwaniyya reflects this custom by having all furniture pushed against the wall and edging the room.

When visiting someone in their office, expect to engage in a friendly conversation not related to the main topic for the first fifteen or twenty minutes. Tea or Turkish coffee will be served as a form of good hospitality, and if you are visiting more than one office during a day expect that you will be served tea or coffee in every office. Many Arabs experience Westerners as hurried and rude because they do not observe these little courtesies. It is polite to ask a man about the health of his "family", but unless he introduces the topic first, no references should be made of his wife unless you are a close friend and have been introduced to her.



Many Kuwaitis are liberal and tolerant of Westerners with regard to dress, but it is best to observe how other Westerners dress in any new situation. Usually, if the manner of dress causes people to stare and whisper, it is not appropriate for the occasion. Both men and women should lean towards modesty if there is any doubt about what to wear. It is quite acceptable for women to wear slacks with loose fitting tops in public, or long shorts for exercise. But women should not be seen on the public beaches in bathing suits in Kuwait City and both men and women may be the subject of comment if they wear short shorts while jogging.

In public places women should avoid prolonged eye contact with strange men and ignore any comments that they might make. If you are being followed, stay in areas with crowds and go immediately to your car. Do not engage in conversation. Any attention you pay to a strange man, no matter how negative or even rude, will be interpreted as interest on your part.

If you are followed in your car, do not go home, but to the nearest Police station or the Embassy. If possible get the license number and description of the car and report it. Again, avoid eye contact and do not make gestures.

If a woman has a flat tire it is very common for a man to stop and change her tire for her. Arabs are, in fact, extremely courteous people, and will go out of their way to help you. Use your best judgement in this situation. Be polite but not so

friendly as to indicate a personal interest. If a man asks for your phone number, give him the number of the American Embassy.

Dating and Marriage

It is not acceptable for a young Kuwaiti female to go out in public with a male friend. While a prospective groom will undoubtedly visit with a young lady with some regularity in her home, such visits will not take on any degree of intimacy. Kuwaitis are very conscious of maintaining the honor of their family and young people are brought up to respect these traditions. While according to Islamic law a man may marry four wives, assuming he can treat each equally, today few Kuwaitis of the younger generation are polygamous.

Diet

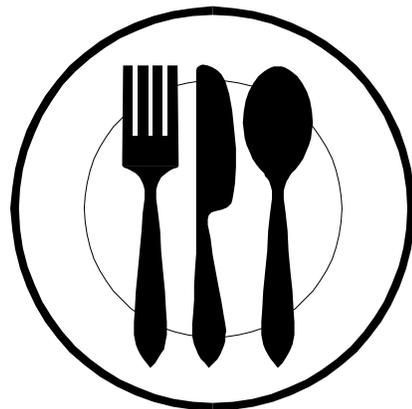
Kuwaiti law prohibits the importation and sale of pork and liquor. Lamb, rice and thin Arabic bread are basic staples and a meal would not be complete without fresh vegetable salads and fruits. Kuwaitis prepare a number of national main course dishes, which feature fish, shrimp, tomatoes, salads, and desserts. Kuwait has put to good use every bit of tillable soil and tomatoes, green peppers, cucumbers and eggplant are grown locally.

Dress

A small number of Kuwaiti males wear Western business suits, but most feel more comfortable in a dishdasha with a ghotra covering the head and held in place by a black eqal. On formal occasions the Kuwaiti male might wear a handsome gold-embroidered cloak called a "bisht", made from natural fibers of brown or black color over the dishdasha. More and more men now wear beards as a sign of religious attachment. Most Kuwaiti women will wear longer style dresses a bit below the knees with long sleeves. More conservative women might wear black abayas over their dresses and cover their heads with scarves. While there are no formal prohibitions on dress, the female foreign visitor should dress modestly.

Eating

Kuwaiti eating habits vary with the lifestyle of the individual family and according to the guests and nature of the occasion. A Kuwaiti will traditionally eat with the right hand, folding the food into thin Arabic bread. In more formal dinner arrangements with foreign guests, Kuwaitis will commonly follow the same forms as do the Westerners. If, however, a foreign guest enjoys an established friendship with a family, the male family members and guests might invite him to join them on the floor, propped up with cushions, and to dine from a common large serving plate placed in the center of the group. Such an arrangement would typically occur in the diwaniyya, a room set aside for male social gatherings. Women would have their own arrangements.



Neither food nor drink should ever be taken with the left hand from an Arab host or bearer. However, despite stories to the contrary, many Arabs hold their fork in their left hand when actually eating, and a left-handed person need not anticipate embarrassment if he or she eats as at home.

Family

Kuwaiti life centers on family. Deference to parents and grandparents is taken for granted. Accordingly, decisions relating to marriage will involve parents and other relatives.

Greetings

Kuwaitis greet their friends enthusiastically, even friends whom they last saw very recently. Persons of the same sex will commonly kiss each other on both cheeks, with some repetition for close friends. More formal greetings include handshakes. Some women may extend a hand to a female. A common greeting, *Keef hal-ek*, means how are you? Conversants exchange a number of formal salutations, most of which thank God (Allah) for well being. More formal greetings include *sabah-al-khair* (good morning) and *masah-al-noor* (good evening). In social gatherings, people rise to greet newcomers with a handshake, kiss, or salutation.

Visiting

More Westernized Kuwaitis may invite a non-Kuwaiti and his spouse to their home for an elaborate meal. More commonly, however, a Kuwaiti will invite a foreign male colleague to dine at his home with a few male guests. The host generally insists on additional helpings and frequently places a special portion on the guest's plate. While the wife of the Kuwaiti host often greets and bids farewell to the guest, she rarely dines with them. Tea and strong "Turkish" coffee accompany social visits and follow meals. Moving the cup from side to side signals the server that you have finished.

One should be careful of expressing any admiration for personal items, as the host may immediately offer it as a gift. Also, in more traditional households, stating your admiration could be inferred as expressing envy and therefore wishing ill upon the owner.

Women in Kuwait

Women of Kuwaiti and Muslim society traditionally came under the custody of their fathers or brothers until they were married. A woman was expected to make a home and care for her family. Often women were restricted to the home unless they were visiting other women. Shopping that had to be done outside the confines of the home was the responsibility of the men or servants.

The traditions of society still rule the behavior of many Kuwaiti women. Today, how women choose to dress is based on family pressures, religious beliefs and experience abroad. Some women wear



Western-type clothing; some wear an abaya, the black cloak that completely covers their bodies. The very conservative wear both an abaya and bourquh, the facemask. Many wear at a minimum a long dress with long sleeves, high neckline and a scarf, believing that uncovered hair and skin are revealing to men.

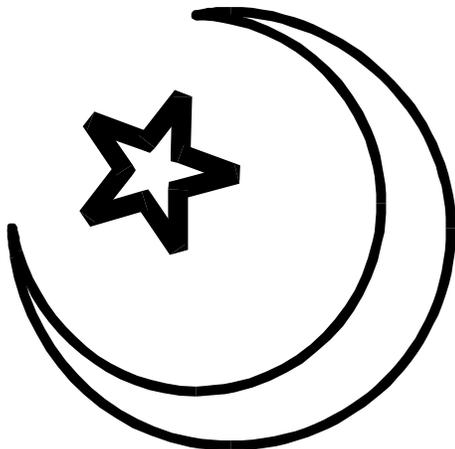
Women's roles in Kuwait are changing, especially since the Gulf War. The spirit of free Kuwait is reflected in the enhanced status of women since the invasion. Women made significant contributions to Kuwait society during the occupation, playing a vital role toward liberation. Aware of their political rights, they are now pursuing them quite seriously; they are speaking out more and are mixing more with men at social functions. Before liberation, Kuwaiti men would rarely have brought their women with them, even to Western events, but now mixed attendance is more common. This increased relaxation also appears in the dress code. With increasing wealth and ready access to domestic help, approximately 60% of Kuwait's women now work. Some own boutiques that sell household items and women's items. Others enter the health care field, managing pharmacies and working in offices. Some women even achieve important positions, such as the current president of Kuwait University, and the Undersecretary for Higher Education, both of whom are women. Since the war, many women have taken very active social roles in organizing charitable work to aid victims of the war. These occupations and volunteer work take second place to home life.

Western women should dress modestly and will feel most comfortable in a dress of knee length skirt and blouse that has, at a minimum, short sleeves and a conservative neckline. On the street, short tank tops, sleeveless blouses, tight-fitting pants or any other revealing clothing is inappropriate. Wearing such apparel often suggests an unintended invitation and would welcome public reactions similar to walking around a mall in the U.S. in a bathing suit.

Religion in Kuwait

Islam is the official religion of Kuwait, and the Kuwaiti people are Muslims. The majority are Sunni Muslims with a sizeable minority of the Shi'ite sect. The State Mosque is opposite the Seif Palace on Gulf Road and many smaller mosques are situated throughout the country. The Kuwait constitution mandates Islam as the official religion and Islamic ("Sharia") law as the basis for legislation. However, Article 35 of the constitution states that freedom of religion is absolute. It permits all residents of Kuwait freedom of belief and religious customs provided they do not conflict with public order or morals. While 95% of the population is Muslim, there are Christians, Hindus, Baha'is, and other religions present. Although these groups may meet privately, no proselytizing is allowed.

There are five pillars of Islam, or basic beliefs common to all Muslims. The first is the profession of faith, "There is no other God but God, and Mohammed is the messenger of God". The second is prayer and the third is fasting during the lunar month of Ramadan. The fourth is giving to charity and the fifth is pilgrimage, or Haj, to Mecca in Saudi Arabia, which all believers should attempt to make at least once during their lifetime. Non-Muslims are forbidden to visit the holy cities of Mecca and Medina at any time.



According to the Islamic faith, the faithful must pray five times each day: at

sunrise, noontime, mid-afternoon, sunset and one and a half-hours after sunset. The exact times of the call to prayers, which change throughout the year, are published daily in the newspaper. Grocery stores and most other stores do not close during prayer times except on Friday, when they close for an hour during the noon prayer.

Each neighborhood in Kuwait has a mosque. Males usually go to the nearest mosque. Some pray wherever they are: on sidewalks, in the shops or at home. On Friday, people worship at the mosques. One should show respect by not talking loudly, looking or walking near Muslims as they pray.

The main events of the Muslim calendar are Ramadan and Haj. Ramadan is an unusual holiday for Westerners and is equivalent to our Christmas in importance. Ramadan occurs in the ninth month of the Islamic year and it is a month of fasting, prayer, and retreat. During this time, Muslims observe a complete fast during the daylight hours, from sunrise to sunset. They don't eat or drink anything or smoke. They eat before sunrise and after sunset. Government offices and most stores operate on shorter hours during this month. Many shops, however, stay open later in the evening than normal. Non-Muslims are expected to refrain from eating, drinking or smoking in public. Hotels will serve only non-Muslim guests during the day. Ramadan is currently falling in the first several weeks of the year, when the weather is cool. When Ramadan falls in summer, it can be especially difficult for believers, causing people to become lethargic and short-tempered and dehydrated. However, most Muslims embrace fasting during the day to remind themselves of those who are less fortunate.

Two major holidays, in addition to Ramadan, are connected with the Islamic faith. They are Eid al-Fitr (the breaking of the Ramadan fast) and Eid al-Adha (which marks the end of the Haj period), both of which are celebrated over a three day period. Government offices will close for these celebrations.

Islam makes provisions for a man to marry as many as four wives, but only if he is certain he can treat them all equally.

Catholic and Protestant church services are conducted in Kuwait City, Ahmadi, and Camp Doha. In Kuwait City, interdenominational Protestant services are held at the Evangelical Church on Friday mornings and Sunday evenings. The Cathedral of the Holy Family (Catholic), with daily services in different languages, is located near the Sheraton hotel, behind the Caesar's Chinese restaurant. St. Paul's Church (Anglican) is located in Ahmadi. A branch of the church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints meets in homes. Camp Doha, the U.S. military base located about 20 kilometers from the old U.S. embassy compound, holds Roman Catholic services on Thursday evenings at 4:30 p.m. and Friday mornings at 9:00 a.m. Protestant services are on Fridays at 11:00 a.m. Gospel Services are at 1:00 p.m. on Fridays and 7:00 p.m. on Sundays. There are daily prayers at the Camp Doha Mosque and information about Jewish services is available from the chaplain.

Islamic Holy Days & Special Observances

While Kuwaitis use the Western (Gregorian) calendar for business purposes, they frequently give dates their equivalents according to the Muslim calendar commencing with the journey (hegira) of the Prophet Mohammed from Mecca to Medina. The Muslim calendar is based on the lunar month, making any given year approximately eleven days shorter than a Gregorian year. Except for Kuwait National Day, celebrated on February 25, all holidays change annually. The most important holidays include Eid Al Fitr, Eid Al Adha, the Prophet Mohammed's birthday, and the Islamic New Year.

Eid Al Sana Al Hijria. Islamic New Year's Day, which is counted in lunar years from the day Mohammed left Mecca for Medina in 622 AD of the Gregorian calendar.

Ashoora. Important day of mourning for Shi'ite Muslims.

Al Mawlad Al Nabawi. The Prophet Mohammed's birthday.

Lilat Al-Mi'raj. Night of the Prophet's ascension to Heaven. The same night Muslims learned the prayer ritual.

Ramadan. Month of fasting. Food or drink can only be consumed between sunset and sunrise; this also includes physical pleasure and smoking.

Lailat Al Qadar. During Ramadan. Remembers the day on which the Prophet Mohammed was told that prayers would be answered.

Eid Al Fitr. The first day of breaking fast after Ramadan. A time of celebration.

Eid Al-Adha. Marks the end of Haj period and commemorates Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son.

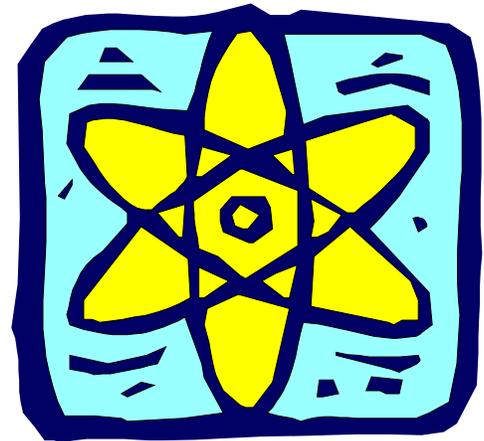
Arts, Science & Education

Kuwait has several artists who work in their own homes or in government-sponsored studios and who give occasional public showings. There are several art galleries in Salmiya that feature Kuwaiti and other Arab artists, as well as occasional exhibitions of art, usually held in major hotels.

Arab and Western music is heard on radio and TV and in public settings in connection with special events. Western music is also presented at various times during the year, primarily by performers sponsored by Western embassies, cultural centers, or major international hotels.

Kuwait has made great strides in its pursuit of scientific knowledge. Most scientific subjects are offered at the undergraduate level at Kuwait University, while research is carried on at the Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR) and in projects funded by the Kuwait Fund for the Advancement of Science (KFAS).

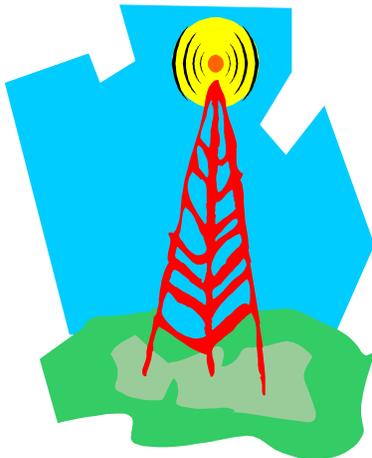
Education is free for all Kuwait children. Most foreign dependents attend private schools which charge rates approved by the Ministry of Education. Kuwait's current education system is relatively new. The basics of religion and the three R's were taught informally at "kuttabs", attached to the local mosques, until 1911, when the state first provided boys with formal education. This system had no set curriculum and provided primarily religious instruction and practical subjects such as pearl diving and trading. A second school with a more structured curriculum and a broader range of subjects opened in 1920. The first school for girls opened in 1937. In 1955, an educational task force from Egypt conducted a thorough audit of the Kuwaiti schools and produced a report and recommendations that provided the basis for today's system.



In 1997, there were 104 private foreign schools in Kuwait, of which 42 were following non-Arabic curriculae. Over 75,000 pupils were enrolled in Arabic foreign schools and over 40,000 pupils were enrolled in non-Arabic schools. Before the war there were only 15 non-Arabic foreign schools in the country.

Kuwait University was founded in 1966 with 418 students, 31 professors, and 3 courses of study. By 1987, the numbers had grown to 10,000 students and 891 professors. Kuwaiti nationals attend Kuwait University free, while other nationalities pay a fee. The university is open to all holders of general secondary diplomas with required grade averages, subject to available openings. Scholarships are available for many students from other Islamic and Arab countries while some students receive a monthly stipend and living quarters free of charge. Kuwaitis who wish to study subjects not offered at Kuwait University are eligible for government scholarships to study abroad, and many other Kuwaitis do so at their own expense. During the 1997-1998 academic year, over 18,000 students were enrolled at Kuwait University, and about 4,000 were studying in the U.S. on scholarship or privately funded programs.

Radio & Television



TV (KTV) has been broadcasting since 1961, and began color transmission in 1974. It is government controlled and operates on PAL 62 lines standard. KTV currently broadcasts on four channels. Channel 1 is exclusively Arabic, but includes a few non-Arabic programs dubbed or subtitled in Arabic. Channel 2 is almost exclusively foreign-language programs, about 90% of which are in English with Arabic subtitles. Channel 3 is mostly sports, and Channel 4 is Entertainment. There is also satellite TV in Kuwait – if your house or apartment building has a satellite dish (landlord responsibility), you will be able to pick up several English language stations, including CNN.

Kuwait Radio broadcasts daily in English, Urdu, Persian, and Arabic. Western rock is popular, and classical music is played regularly on the FM station. The Voice of America, BBC, and other foreign radio services can be heard and reception is good. Radio listeners should bring a good short wave set to post. AFRTS (the Armed Forces Radio-Television Service) now broadcasts on two channels in Kuwait: one is music, the other is "talk" radio, with many National Public Radio programs.

Newspapers, Magazines, & Technical Journals

The Kuwaiti press has traditionally had the reputation of being the most active and unfettered in the Arab World. Kuwait has two English-language daily newspapers, *The Arab Times* and *The Kuwait Times*. Five dailies and numerous weekly, biweekly, and monthly periodicals are published in Arabic. *The International Herald Tribune*, *The Wall Street*



Journal (European Edition), and the international editions of *Time*, *USA Today*, and *Newsweek* are available in Kuwait within a day or two of publication.

American and British books on a variety of subjects are available at selected bookshops at 50%-100% above publisher prices. No public libraries carry collections in English.

Commerce, Industry & Agriculture

Modern Kuwait was founded about 1740 by desert nomads from Saudi Arabia, but archaeological evidence indicates habitation for over 3,000 years. Because of its Gulf location, fishing, pearl diving, and trading became the most important occupations. Oil was discovered in 1938, but production was insignificant until after World War II. Since 1950, the country has developed rapidly. Today, Kuwait's prosperity depends on oil and income generated by oil revenues invested primarily in the U.S. and Europe. The oil sector provides more than 90% of Kuwait's export earnings and a comparable proportion of total government revenues. Many other commercial and economic activities serve the petroleum industry and its employees.

Existing industries include water-desalination plants, oil refineries with desulfurizing plants, an LPG plant, an ammonia plant, a chemical fertilizer factory, cement, brick, and concrete block production, bottling plants, and various light industries.

Kuwait has the world's highest per capita imports. The local market reflects Kuwait's free trade outlook. Since 1965 the U.S. has been one of the leading exporters to Kuwait, owing to Kuwait's purchases of American aircraft, industrial equipment, cars, air-conditioners, and other durable consumer goods. The U.S. also exports substantial services to Kuwait. In 1992, the U.S. had favorable trade balances of over one billion dollars. A wide range of products from the U.S., Europe, neighboring countries, and the Far East are also available. Kuwaiti importers choose their goods almost entirely by price and local demand, not by national origin.

Only 1% of the land is cultivated, and with intensive irrigation, shrubs and trees can be grown for landscaping. This can be seen in regions like Ahmadi and Wafra. Here, the government has sponsored experimental farms that use a system whereby fruits are grown on a gravel bed and are nurtured on solutions of water and fertilizers. There are also successful dairy and poultry farms, and almost all of the market for fresh fish is supplied locally. Tomatoes, radishes, melons, and cucumbers are the main crops grown in Kuwait.

The Economy of Kuwait

Kuwait has a mixed economic system. Petroleum was first discovered in 1938 by joint Gulf-British petroleum concessions and was initially tapped in 1946. The Kuwait Oil Company is the major producer of crude oil in Kuwait and until 1974 was owned by Gulf and British Petroleum. Since 1946 the exploration of Kuwait's enormous oil reserves



resulted in the transformation of Kuwait from a tribal society, with a per capita income of \$35.00 per year, to a modern welfare state with one of the highest per capita incomes in the world. The government owns all petroleum, natural gas, and derivative industries, while the private sector operates building materials, construction, trade and finance companies. Kuwaiti citizens share this wealth through government sponsored programs. Government spending priorities emphasize education, housing, roads, public utilities, telecommunications, and medical care.

The United States and Kuwait share economic links, formerly second only to Japan for imports to Kuwait. However, since the liberation of Kuwait, the United States has become the number one exporter to Kuwait. Until 1976, the Gulf Company was 50% partner with British Petroleum in the Kuwait Oil Company. The Getty Oil Company shares concession rights and production in the former Neutral Zone. Many American firms have resident offices in Kuwait to provide import goods and services.

The Kuwaiti economy grew by 16.8% in 1996, reaching a GDP of approximately \$31 billion. Per capita GDP was \$17,630 in 1996, an increase of 12.6% over 1995. Kuwait's principal exports are crude petroleum and refined products, natural gas, chemicals, machinery, and transport equipment. Kuwait exports primarily to Japan, Italy, the U.S., Taiwan, West Germany, and the United Kingdom.

The Strategic Importance of Oil from the Gulf

Security in the Gulf is so important, strategically, to the United States because the U.S. is the biggest oil consumer in the world. We use roughly 25% of the world's oil. However, we produce only half the oil we consume and import the rest. Furthermore, the U.S. has oil reserves equal to less than 10 years of production at current rates and our reliance on imported oil will go up.

The Middle East, on the other hand, is where the oil is. Two-thirds of the world's oil is in the Middle East, concentrated in just five countries: Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. However, just as the world's oil is concentrated in the Middle East, within the Middle East the oil is concentrated in the Northern Gulf. It is important to understand just how great the disparity in reserve distribution is between the Gulf and the rest of the world.

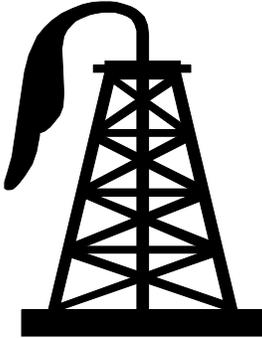
The proved oil reserves of the entire United States, including Alaska, are about 23 billion barrels. The Ghawar field in Saudi Arabia has ultimate reserves of 75 billion barrels. The Khafji/Sfaniyya Field (just over the border in Saudi Arabia) is the largest offshore oil field in the world with about 40 billion barrels of oil. The Burgan Field in Kuwait has about 60 billion barrels of oil, which is more oil than the proved reserves of the entire former Soviet Union. All in all, half the oil in the world lies within a 300-mile radius of Kuwait City.

The Oil Situation in Kuwait

Kuwait has returned, essentially, to the status it had before the Gulf War. The oil well fires have been out for over six years, and if you drove down to the oil fields, you would see very few signs that there had even been a war. The country's

production capacity is back to 2.5 million barrels per day and refining capacity is at 800,000 barrels per day. Kuwait, by the way, has substantial upgrading capacity in its refineries and is one of the biggest suppliers of jet fuel to the U.S. military.

Within OPEC, the primary tension since the Gulf War has been between Iran and Saudi Arabia. Iran, which really can't increase its production capacity, is a "price hawk" and wants OPEC to drive up prices as high as it can to maximize revenue. The Saudis, on the other hand, have substantial reserves and production capacity and want to maintain moderate prices to ensure a long-term market for their crude. Kuwait has aligned itself solidly with the Saudis on this issue within OPEC.



Outlook for Oil in the Region

There are several big issues, with regard to oil, that will have to be resolved over the next several years. The return of Iraq to oil markets is one. There has been a lot of concern in the past that, when sanctions on Iraq are lifted, it will disrupt oil prices worldwide. Although there is still a lot of concern among the oil producing states, we sense a growing consensus that a booming demand may minimize the impact on the market.

Further out, there is the very real concern that there could be a supply shortfall by the end of this decade. One major oil company predicts that, if current prices are maintained, the call on OPEC crude will be 40 million barrels a day by 2005. That's 15 million barrels a day more than current production. One big question is "where will that oil come from?" We haven't found anyone yet who plans to add that kind of capacity.

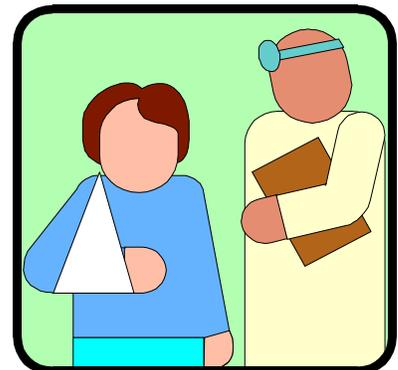
The next logical question is "will it come from our friends in the region or from our adversaries?" Given the possibility of higher production rates AND higher oil prices, the evolution of power in the Gulf may well be determined by who takes the lead now in building production capacity.

Health & Medicine

Free health care is available to citizens and non-citizens alike in government hospitals and clinics. Most doctors speak English and the clinics will provide immunizations, emergency care and medication, if indicated, all free of charge.

Private health care is available in Kuwait for a fee. The private system consists of outpatient clinics and hospitals. The cost of private health care here is, in most cases, lower than in the U.S.

Most private clinics will take appointments and may require you to prepay. You should also bring extra cash with you for any lab work or prescriptions. Always request a copy of any lab work, tests, or other procedures you may have done so it will be easier to explain to your doctor back home what was done here.



Transportation

Automobiles



Private cars are the principal means of practical and dependable transportation in Kuwait. Driving is on the right; roads and highways are excellent, and several major highways exist. Most principal roads are divided highways with four to six lanes. Excellent all-weather highways lead south and west to Saudi Arabia. The accident rate in Kuwait is one of the world's highest, due to excessive speed, lax enforcement, and lack of basic training on many drivers. Practice defensive driving to avoid accidents.

All privately owned vehicles must be imported under the owners' names and registered and licensed with the Kuwait Traffic Department. Before registration, you must have third-party liability and personal insurance at a cost of KD 19.5000 (about \$66.50) a year for a regular 5-passenger vehicle. Comprehensive insurance is available locally; the price varies according to vehicle, age, etc. A vehicle must be mechanically and visually inspected by Traffic Department inspectors; any mechanical problems and/or major dents, cracked window, missing lights, etc., must be corrected or repaired before the vehicle can be legally registered. The inspection covers the brakes, motor condition, lights, wipers, windows, mirrors, and general appearance of the vehicles. Diplomatic license tags are free; Kuwaiti license tags cost KD 10.000 (about \$35.00). A Kuwaiti driver's license is free. Fees are waived for diplomatic personnel, except for a KD 0.5000 application fee, which everyone is entitled to pay.

Any employees or dependent over 18 years old residing in Kuwait may obtain a Kuwaiti drivers license either by presenting a valid U.S. or European license or by taking a driving test. The latter is a long, drawn-out, time-consuming procedure. Nonresident personnel on TDY may obtain a 30-day temporary license on presentation of a valid international driver's license. Four photos (1" x 1") are required. The embassy handles all processing for insurance, registration, and driver's licenses.

On January 1, 1994 a mandatory seat belt law went into effect in Kuwait. While it is not always observed by Kuwaitis, drivers are ticketed for not wearing seat belts if pulled over by police for a traffic violation. Kuwaiti police also issue tickets, without pulling over a driver, for various infractions (illegal U-turns, speeding, etc.) and simply submit the tickets to the Motor Vehicle officials. The hapless driver learns of his outstanding ticket(s) upon re-registering his car (a yearly requirement), renewing a driver's license or trying to sell the car. They must be paid before any new transaction takes place.

Large American passenger cars are popular in Kuwait as roads are broad and flat and gasoline is inexpensive. Luxury cars such as Mercedes-Benz are a common sight. Toyota, Nissan, Mazda, BMW, and other Japanese and European-made cars are also popular. Parts and services for GM, Ford, and Chrysler products and for most Japanese and European vehicles are available locally, but parts and labor are expensive. Smaller neighborhood garages are less expensive for repairs, but are not always reliable.

Local Transportation

Kuwait has a reliable taxi service. Several taxi firms may be called for pickup service. Taxis are available only at the airport, hotels, and in the center of the city. Fares are reasonable, and tipping is unnecessary. Public buses provide cheap transportation between the central district and most outlying areas, but poor scheduling, variations in arrival times, and language difficulties discourage use by most Westerners.

Travel Out of Kuwait

For destinations outside Kuwait, air transportation is commonly used, and adequate connections can be made to most points. Kuwait is served by a number of international airlines, including Lufthansa, British Air, KLM, and Kuwait Airways. For travel to the U.S. from Kuwait, the traveler can connect with American carriers in several major European cities. No train service operates from Kuwait. All airline service is international.

