

Kuwait

The **State of Kuwait** is a sovereign Arab emirate on the coast of the Persian Gulf, enclosed by Saudi Arabia to the south and Iraq to the north and west. The name is a diminutive of an Arabic word meaning "fortress built near water. It has a population of 3.1 million and an area of 17,818 km². Kuwait is a constitutional monarchy with a parliamentary system of government and Kuwait City serves as the country's political and economic capital.

History

Recorded history of the State of Kuwait goes back to the year 1613. Tribes from central Arabia settled in Kuwait in the 17th-century after experiencing a massive drought in their native land. Kuwait used to be a major center for spice trading between India and Europe. By late 18th-century, most of the local people made a living selling pearls. In 1756, the people elected Sabah I bin Jaber as the first emir of Kuwait. The current ruling family of Kuwait, al-Sabah, are descendants of Sabah I.

As the influence of the Ottoman Empire increased in the region, Kuwait was assigned the status of a *caza* of the Ottomans. After the signing of the Anglo-Ottoman Convention of 1913, then emir of Kuwait, Mubarak Al-Sabah, was diplomatically recognized by both the On June 19, 1961, Kuwait became fully independent following an exchange of notes between the United Kingdom and the then emir of Kuwait, Abdullah Al-Salim Al-Sabah. The Gulf rupee, issued by the Reserve Bank of India, was replaced by the Kuwaiti dinar.

Geography

Located in the north-east corner of the Arabian Peninsula, Kuwait is one of the smallest countries in the world in terms of land area. The flat, sandy Arabian Desert covers most of Kuwait. Kuwait is the only country in the world which has no natural lake or water reservoir here is little difference in the country's altitude with the highest point in the country being 306 m above sea-level. It has nine islands, all of which with the exception of Failaka Island are uninhabited. With an area of 860 km², the Bubiyan is the largest island in Kuwait and is connected to the rest of the country by a 2,380 m long bridge. The land area is considered arable and sparse vegetation is found along its 499 km long coastline. Kuwait City is located on Kuwait Bay, a natural deep-water harbor.

Climate

Kuwait has an arid continental climate. Summer, which lasts from May to September, is extremely hot and dry with temperatures easily crossing 45 °C (113 °F) during daytime Kuwait has a fairly high diurnal temperature range (day-night temperature difference). Winter season, from November through February, is cool with some precipitation and average temperatures around 13 °C (56 °F) with extremes from -2 °C to 27 °C..

Population

As of 2007, Kuwait's population was estimated to be 3 to 3.5 million people which included approximately 2 million non-nationals. Kuwaiti citizens are therefore a minority of those who reside in Kuwait. The government rarely grants citizenship to Kuwait's official language is Arabic, though English is widely spoken

About 85% of Kuwait's population practises Islam. Despite Islam being the state religion, Kuwait has large communities of Christians (est. 300,000 to 400,000), Hindus (est. 300,000), Buddhists (est. 100,000).

Currency: Kuwaiti dinars (KD)

Living as an expat - Housing

Renting accommodation in Kuwait is a straightforward, well-established practice. Major international companies with trading links in the region often have housing arrangements in the form of long-term leases on properties for their staff. If you have to find your own accommodation, your sponsor and his staff will invariably help. There's considerable choice in all price bands and it's usually quite straightforward to find the type of property you want.

'Unfurnished' might mean only the barest of essentials but is more likely to include a kitchen unit, curtain rails and lighting fixtures or it might mean semi-furnished, with kitchen equipment, a cooker, refrigerator and washing machine. In most cases, it includes a television aerial socket with access to local stations

It's usual for the rental contract to be drawn up with the owner of the property using your sponsor as the principal.

Getting there & away

Kuwait Public Transport Company operates comfy, modern buses to a number of different destinations beyond Kuwait's borders.

Kuwait International Airport is a reasonably modern enterprise and plans are afoot to upgrade it with the building of a second terminal.

Kuwait has a cheap and extensive local bus system but it's designed for the convenience of local residents rather than for visiting tourists. The routes therefore don't often coincide with the places of tourist interest. Nonetheless, if a 10-minute walk either side of the bus stop isn't a problem, pick up a bus timetable from the main bus station in the city centre.

Expect costs of between KD10 (for a Toyota Corolla) to KD30 (for a Toyota Prado) per day for car hire. This rate usually includes unlimited kilometers and full insurance.

More information

For more information on Global Relocation Consultants (GRC) expat relocation services and mobility management please visit our website: www.grconsultants.org