



# Riyadh

Photo: adznano3/shutterstock



Jimmy283/shutterstock

Shimmering like a precious stone in the fierce desert sun, the city of Riyadh, Saudi Arabia's capital and main financial hub, is a complex mix of dualisms that intrigues the intrepid traveller. A modern cutting-edge metropolis that boldly strides towards the future, yet a city firmly rooted in the traditions of its historical past. Known as the 'Queen of the Desert', Riyadh will captivate every suitor with its desert landscapes and lush green oases, its ancient monuments, and the renowned Arabic hospitality of its residents.



Chaudhary Umair Ahmad/shutterstock



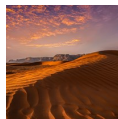
Fedor Selivanov/shutterstock

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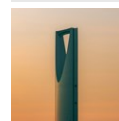
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Ushaiqer Heritage Village, located approximately 200 kilometres northwest of...

## THE CITY



Chaudhary Umair Ahmad/shutterstock

The centre of Riyadh and the birthplace of the state of Saudi Arabia is the area of Al-Bathaa, where you'll find fascinating traces of the old city. At its heart lies Al-Musmak Fortress, a stunning example of desert architecture, whilst surrounding it is the King Abdul Aziz Historical centre and the souks that give a taste of the ambiance of yesteryear.

If you're thirsting for more cultural sites then head to the Al-Dira area which is home to many traditional buildings such as the Royal Palace. On the outskirts of the city is the ancient town of Ad-Diriyah.

In complete contrast, the neighbourhood of Olaya is home to gleaming skyscrapers. This is where you will find the bulk of Riyadh's high-end hotels, restaurants and shopping malls, chief among them being the Kingdom centre and the Al Faisaliah tower which stand like sentinels guarding the city.

Note that the city is run on a strict Islamic moral and cultural code, and dress should be conservative at all times.

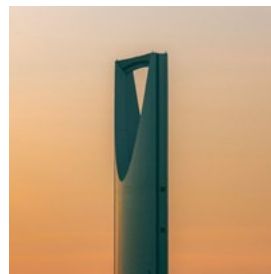
## DO & SEE



Benny Marty/shutterstock

Riyadh's historic heart offers a compelling blend of traditional mud-brick architecture and modern design. Key sights include the formidable Al-Musmak Castle, a vital landmark in the city's origin story, and the contemporary shopping avenues of the Granada Centre. Visitors should note that some cultural sites may have specific access guidelines.

### Riyadh Kingdom Centre & Sky Bridge



Rising 302 metres over Riyadh, the Kingdom Centre remains a defining feature of the city's skyline. Its most distinctive element is the 56-metre Sky Bridge, connecting the tower's two peaks on the 99th floor. High-speed elevators transport visitors to this vantage point, which offers sweeping, unobstructed views of the capital through secure glass panels. The complex also houses the world's second-highest mosque and the Al-Mamlaka shopping centre. For the clearest perspective, a daytime visit is recommended to avoid the crowds that gather for the illuminated evening spectacle.

Photo: Ibrahim Abdullah/unsplash

Address: King Abdullah Road, King Fahd, Riyadh

Phone: +966 1 211 2222

Internet: [kingdomcentre.com.sa](http://kingdomcentre.com.sa)

### Al-Rajhi Grand Mosque



Al-Rajhi Grand Mosque stands as one of the largest places of worship in Riyadh. Its vast prayer halls can accommodate over 20,500 worshippers, and the complex functions as a comprehensive Islamic centre with libraries and educational facilities. While entry is reserved for Muslims, the impressive exterior architecture, particularly striking when illuminated after dark, makes it a notable city landmark. The mosque's scale and community role underscore its significant position within the capital's religious and cultural landscape.

Photo: VD Image Lab/shutterstock  
Address: Ad Dubbat, Riyadh  
Internet: [themosquetour.com](http://themosquetour.com)

### Deera Square



Deera Square is a central public space known by several names, including Alsafat, Justice Square, and colloquially as 'Chop-Chop Square', a reference to its former role as a site for public executions. Today, that macabre past stands in stark contrast to its present function. The square has been transformed into a vast, open area with landscaped greenery, benches and cafés. By afternoon and evening, it becomes a lively social hub where locals gather, creating a relaxed and communal atmosphere far removed from its historical notoriety.

Photo: Andrew V Marcus/shutterstock

### Edge of the World



The Edge of the World, known locally as Jebel Fihrayn, is a dramatic 1,131-metre-high escarpment marking the end of the Tuwaig Mountain range approximately 100 kilometres northwest of Riyadh. The name derives from the breathtaking panorama from the cliff's edge, where the vast, flat desert stretches to the horizon. Reaching the site requires a 4x4 vehicle and careful preparation, as the final stretch involves rugged, unmarked desert tracks with no services or reliable mobile signal. The challenging access is rewarded with stark, magnificent views, fossil-strewn terrain, and exceptional stargazing, best experienced at sunset when the cliffs glow in the warm evening light.

Photo: Fedor Selivanov/shutterstock  
Internet: [www.trackthemarchksa.com/product/buddhist-circuit-tour](http://www.trackthemarchksa.com/product/buddhist-circuit-tour)

### Ushaiqer Heritage Village

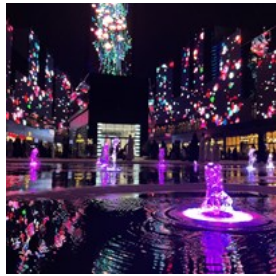


Ushaiqer Heritage Village, located approximately 200 kilometres northwest of Riyadh, offers a journey into the architectural and cultural history of the Najd region. This labyrinthine settlement of ochre-coloured mud-brick houses, some dating back centuries, was once a vital stop for pilgrims. Its narrow, shaded alleys wind between traditional dwellings, many featuring distinctive triangular windows and carved wooden doors. While some buildings have been restored, others stand in a state of arrested decay, creating an atmospheric exploration of a bygone era. The site also

includes a small museum displaying local artefacts, providing context to the evocative surroundings.

Photo: Nicola Messana Photos/shutterstock  
Address: Ushaiqer, Saudi Arabia  
Internet: [www.ushayqer.com](http://www.ushayqer.com)

### Boulevard World & Riyadh Season

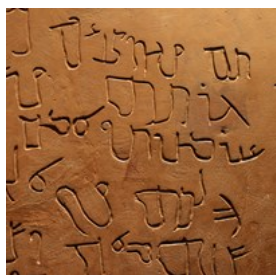


Boulevard World is a flagship zone of the annual Riyadh Season, a large-scale entertainment festival typically running from October to March.

This temporary theme park is conceived as a global tour, featuring elaborate pavilions and replicas of international landmarks that evoke destinations from Venice to Tokyo. Beyond the architectural simulations, the zone offers a condensed experience of global cultures through themed dining, shopping, and live performances. Centred around a vast artificial lagoon, it functions as a major attraction within the wider festival, which transforms the city with concerts, sporting events, and numerous other entertainment districts.

Photo: alfaisal show/shutterstock  
Address: Al-Aqiq, Riyadh  
Internet:  
[www.visitsaudi.com/en/riyadh/events/boulevard-world](http://www.visitsaudi.com/en/riyadh/events/boulevard-world)

### National Museum



The National Museum in Riyadh offers a comprehensive journey through the history of the Arabian Peninsula.

Housed within a striking modernist building, its eight chronologically arranged galleries employ a sophisticated mix of

artefacts, full-scale reconstructions and multimedia presentations to tell this expansive story. You can explore everything from prehistoric rock carvings and a replica Nabataean tomb to exhibits on the rise of Islam and the founding of the modern Saudi state.

Photo: Mohammad Alshahrani/unsplash  
Address: King Saud Road, Al-Murabba, Riyadh  
Internet: [engage.moc.gov.sa/national\\_museum](http://engage.moc.gov.sa/national_museum)

### Al-Masmak Palace



Al-Masmak Palace is a clay and mud-brick fortress whose pivotal role in Saudi history belies its modest scale.

Built around 1865, it was the site of the daring 1902 raid that led to the recapture of Riyadh, a foundational event for the modern kingdom. The spearhead from that assault remains embedded in its main gate. Today, the palace functions as a museum, its former residential quarters and majlis displaying historical photographs, weapons, and multimedia exhibits that chronicle the story of the nation's unification.

Photo: Fedor Selivanov/shutterstock  
Address: Al Imam Turki Ibn Abd Allah Ibn Muhammad, Ad Dirah, Riyadh  
Internet: [www.visitsaudi.com/en/riyadh/attractions/al-masmak-palace-in-riyadh](http://www.visitsaudi.com/en/riyadh/attractions/al-masmak-palace-in-riyadh)

### Diriyah



Diriyah, the original seat of the Saudi dynasty and a UNESCO World Heritage Site, lies northwest of central Riyadh. Founded in 1446

along the banks of Wadi Hanifah, its historic At-Turaif district is a remarkable collection of

mud-brick ruins that was the nation's first capital. The area now functions as a vast cultural and heritage destination, where visitors can explore restored palaces, museums housed within original structures, and walk ancient streets. Beyond the core historical site, the development offers parks, traditional markets and seasonal events, creating a multifaceted glimpse into the kingdom's origins.

Photo: Jimmy283/shutterstock  
Address: Ad'Diriyah, Riyadh  
Internet: [www.diriyah.sa/en](http://www.diriyah.sa/en)

### Al-Murabba Palace



Al-Murabba Palace offers a direct insight into the life of King Abdulaziz Al-Saud, the founder of modern Saudi Arabia.

Built just outside old Riyadh's walls, this square, mud-brick complex served as his official residence and the seat of government from 1938. Its design, centred around a large internal courtyard, reflects both traditional Najdi architecture and the need for privacy and security. The palace's 32 rooms, now a museum, display personal effects, historical photographs, and administrative offices, providing a tangible connection to a pivotal era in the nation's history.

Photo: Muttaz/shutterstock  
Address: 2722 King Saud Road, Al-Murabba, Riyadh  
Internet:  
[www.visitsaudi.com/en/riyadh/attractions/al-murabba-palace](http://www.visitsaudi.com/en/riyadh/attractions/al-murabba-palace)

### Old Camel Market



The Old Camel Market, situated approximately 30 kilometres north of Riyadh, is one of the largest such trading grounds on the Arabian Peninsula. This sprawling, dusty arena offers a direct encounter with an enduring tradition, where Bedouin traders assess, present and haggle over hundreds of dromedaries. The atmosphere is immersive and unfiltered, defined by the din of negotiation and the distinct, earthy scent of the animals. While the trading continues throughout the day, the activity peaks in the late afternoon. It is advisable to confirm its current location before visiting, as urban development has prompted relocations in the past.

Photo: pixeltaster/shutterstock  
Address: Tuwaiq, Riyadh

### Desert by Night



A night in the desert reveals a landscape transformed. The intense silence and profound darkness that follow sunset give way to a celestial display, with the Milky Way arching vividly across the sky. This experience often begins with the thrill of dune bashing at dusk, followed by the tranquillity of a traditional camp. Here, the evening is spent around a fire, enjoying aromatic coffee and sweet dates, perhaps accompanied by the gentle bubbling of a shisha pipe. It is a stark, beautiful contrast to the daytime heat and a chance to comprehend the vast, empty spaces that have shaped Bedouin culture for millennia.

Photo: Foture Studio/shutterstock

Address: Dhahran, Riyadh  
Phone: +966 53 290 5928  
Internet:  
[www.mysauditours.com/tours/overnight-desert-safari-riyadh](http://www.mysauditours.com/tours/overnight-desert-safari-riyadh)  
Email: [bookings@mysauditours.com](mailto:bookings@mysauditours.com)

### Al-Faisaliya Tower



Al-Faisaliya Tower is a landmark of modern Riyadh, recognised as the kingdom's first skyscraper. Its distinctive pyramid-like form, crowned with a glass globe, punctuates the Olaya district skyline. The primary draw is the observation deck, which provides a sweeping 360-degree panorama of the city's expansive urban grid. The complex at its base houses a refined shopping mall, known for its selection of luxury brands and calm, spacious corridors. While the city now has taller structures, the tower remains a significant architectural pioneer, offering a classic perspective on Riyadh's dramatic growth.

Photo: [Essa\\_A/shutterstock](#)  
Address: 7411 King Fahd Road, Al-Olaya, Riyadh  
Internet: [www.alfaisaliahmall.com](http://www.alfaisaliahmall.com)

### Red Sand Dunes Adventures



The Red Sand Dunes around Riyadh present a dramatic landscape for desert exploration. Numerous operators run excursions to this area, typically including transport from the city. The core experience often involves dune bashing in a 4x4 vehicle, followed by more hands-on activities such as riding a quad bike over the sandy slopes. For a more traditional pace, a camel ride offers a different perspective on the vast terrain.

These guided tours simplify the logistics, providing equipment and refreshments for a seamless adventure into the striking desert environment.

Photo: [Kashif Hameed/shutterstock](#)  
Phone: +966 50 808 0143

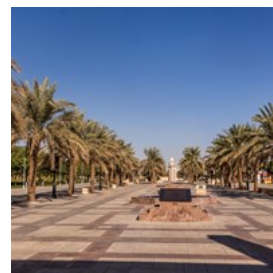
### Royal Saudi Air Force Museum



The Royal Saudi Air Force Museum, also known as Saqer Aljazirah, chronicles the history of military aviation in the kingdom from the 1920s to the present day. The museum is divided into two distinct sections: a large outdoor park displaying historic aircraft, including a Lockheed L-1011 Tristar that stands as a landmark near the ring road, and a modern indoor hall. Inside, exhibits trace the service's evolution through uniforms, weaponry, and interactive displays. For aviation enthusiasts, it offers a comprehensive look at the technological and strategic development of one of the nation's key military branches.

Photo: [Richmarks/shutterstock](#)  
Address: Saqer Al-Jazirah Royal Air Force Museum, Eastern Ring Road, Riyadh  
Phone: +966 11 492 4854  
Internet:  
[theotherpaths.com/saqer-aljazirah-aviation-museum-riyadh](http://theotherpaths.com/saqer-aljazirah-aviation-museum-riyadh)

### King Abdullah Park



King Abdullah Park provides a spacious, manicured retreat in the heart of Riyadh. Its expansive lawns, wide pedestrian pathways and artificial lake offer residents a place for picnics, jogs, and leisurely strolls. The park is

particularly popular in the evenings when its large fountain is illuminated for a synchronised musical show. A dedicated children's play area and various food kiosks make it a practical destination for families. A modest entrance fee helps maintain the park's clean and orderly environment, contributing to its reputation as one of the city's most pleasant and well-kept green spaces.

Photo: Matyas Rehak/shutterstock

Address: 6628 Al-Ameen Abdullah Al-Ali Al-Naeem Street, Al-Malaz, Riyadh

## DINING



Trio Design Team/shutterstock

Dining out is one of the favourite pastimes in Riyadh. The typical Saudi diet consists of a range of pulses such as rice, bulgur wheat, lentils, or chickpeas (hummus) served with grilled/barbecued meats such as lamb or chicken and the obligatory pita bread.

Note that the restaurants in Riyadh are segregated. However, there are family facilities where married couples can dine together.

## The Globe



The Globe offers a singular dining experience, situated within the iconic golden sphere that crowns Al-Faisaliah Tower.

Reached by a high-speed lift, the restaurant provides uninterrupted panoramic views of Riyadh from its elevated, circular dining room. The cuisine is modern European, served in a smart casual setting that matches the refined atmosphere. While the menu and service are designed for a special occasion, the primary draw remains the breathtaking cityscape visible from every table, making it a definitive destination for its perspective alone.

Photo: Farooq Afzal khan/shutterstock

Address: King Fahd Branch Road, The Geodesic Orb of Al-Faisaliah Tower, Riyadh

Phone: +966 11 273 2005

Internet:

[www.mandarinoriental.com/en/riyadh/olaya/dine/the-globe](http://www.mandarinoriental.com/en/riyadh/olaya/dine/the-globe)

## Najd Village



Najd Village offers a deeply immersive journey into the culinary heritage of the central Saudi region from which it takes its name. The

restaurant's design is a key part of the experience, featuring mud-brick walls, traditional Najdi geometric details, and private family dining rooms with floor seating. It distinguishes itself with a menu dedicated to specific regional classics rarely found on such a scale, including dishes like jareesh (crushed wheat), hanini (a date and bread dessert) and goursan (a layered flatbread). For a comprehensive tasting, the "village sofra" is a

must-try; this extensive sharing platter brings together mixed meat stews, breads, and appetisers, providing a structured exploration of Najdi flavours. This specific focus on the highland's cuisine makes it a definitive destination for that particular culinary tradition.

Photo: Dina Saeed/shutterstock

Address: King Abdul Aziz Branch Road, Alyasmin, Riyadh

Internet: najdvillage.com

### Mirage



Mirage offers a theatrical dining experience where Asian-inspired cuisine is served within an elaborately themed environment. The interior

is designed to evoke a classical Chinese garden, complete with private booths and aquarium features. A notable aspect of the service is the use of robots for delivering certain items, adding a modern touch to the traditional decor. The menu focuses on Taiwanese and Chinese dishes, with private cabins ensuring a sense of seclusion for diners.

Photo: Elena Eryomenko/shutterstock

Address: Takhassusi Street, Ar Rahmaniyyah, Riyadh

Phone: +966 11 483 4216

### Muqlat Alfurayj



Muqlat Alfurayj is a popular destination for a traditional Najdi breakfast in Riyadh.

Specialising in the hearty morning fare of the

central region, its menu features dishes like ful medames, eggs cooked with tomato and onion, and kleicha pastries. The atmosphere is casual and family-friendly, often filling quickly after

opening. While the restaurant serves food throughout the day, its primary draw is the authentic, flavourful breakfast experience, best enjoyed early to secure a table and avoid the busy mid-morning rush.

Photo: Martina Sgorlon/shutterstock

Address: King Fahd Road, Al-Aqiq, Riyadh

Internet: [www.instagram.com/mugalat](http://www.instagram.com/mugalat)

### Assaraya Turkish Restaurant



Assaraya Turkish Restaurant is a popular and unpretentious dining spot in the Al-Olaya district, known for its generous portions and

affordable prices. The extensive menu features a wide array of Turkish classics, from freshly baked flatbreads and assorted meze to mixed grills and shawarma. The sprawling, casual setting is consistently busy, reflecting its strong local following. Beyond its culinary offerings, the establishment has also gained recognition for its community initiatives, providing meals to those in need.

Photo: banu sevim/shutterstock

Address: Prince Sultan Bin Abdulaziz Road, Al-Olaya, Riyadh

Phone: +966 11 463 6000

Internet: [www.instagram.com/alssaraya](http://www.instagram.com/alssaraya)

### Al-Tazaj



With many locations in the city, Al-Tazaj BBQ Chicken is one of the oldest restaurants in Riyadh, serving excellent barbecued chicken

marinated in Middle Eastern spices. The chickens are fed on wheat and soy beans, and they are cooked fresh.

Photo: Marian Weyo/shutterstock

Address: Prince Turki bin Abdulaziz Al-Thani Street,  
Al-Muruj, Riyadh  
Phone: +966920000765  
Internet: [www.taza.com.sa/en](http://www.taza.com.sa/en)

### Tokyo Restaurant



Tokyo Restaurant holds a notable position as the first Japanese restaurant to open in Saudi Arabia, establishing itself in 1985. It presents a

polished, fine-dining take on Japanese cuisine, with a menu that spans from classic sushi and teppanyaki prepared at live cooking stations to more creative fusion dishes. The sophisticated, modern ambience has remained a constant, appealing to those seeking a formal dining experience.

Photo: grafvision/shutterstock

Address: Al-Urubah Road, As Sulimaniyah, Riyadh  
Phone: +966 9200 09662  
Internet: [tokyoarabia.com](http://tokyoarabia.com)

### Lusin



Lusin offers you the best of Armenian Cuisine in a high-class setting. The place dazzles with chic elegance and rich flavours. Try the diced

beef in cherry sauce, it's heavenly.

Photo: Tatiana Volgutova/shutterstock

Address: Centria Mall, Prince Muhammad Bin Abdulaziz Road, Riyadh  
Phone: +966 11 520 0161  
Internet: [lusinrestaurant.com](http://lusinrestaurant.com)

### Maestro Pizza



If you're looking for an Italian experience in Riyadh, Maestro Pizza is your place. Margarita, Mexicana or the Meat Lover special are among the most popular dishes on the menu. The cosy setting and reasonable prices make this place a favourite among tourists.

Photo: puhhha/shutterstock

Address: Al-Asli Road, Al-Wurud, Riyadh  
Phone: +966 9200 17777  
Internet: [www.instagram.com/maestropizza\\_ae](http://www.instagram.com/maestropizza_ae)

### Lahori Khabay



Lahori Khabay is a popular destination for robust Pakistani cuisine, consistently praised for its authentic flavours and generous portions. The

open buffet offers notable value, though the simple, no-frills setting prioritises substance over style. Freshly baked bread and mixed grill plates are particular highlights, making it a favoured spot for a hearty, flavourful meal that draws a loyal local crowd.

Photo: Sergii Koval/shutterstock

Address: Prince Abdulrahman Bin Abdulaziz, Al-Murabba, Riyadh  
Phone: +96 11 405 8159



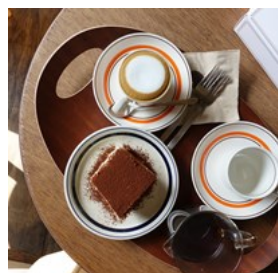
coffee break.

Photo: Prawit Samphonkrung/shutterstock

Address: Prince Muhammad Ibn Abd Al-Aziz Street, As Sulimaniyah, Riyadh

Internet: [www.urthcaffe.sa](http://www.urthcaffe.sa)

### Namq Cafe



Namq Café has established itself as a prominent local chain, embraced for its consistent specialty coffee and minimalist,

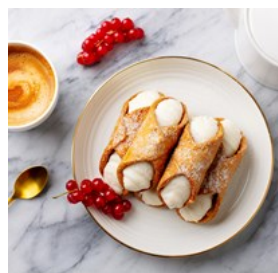
serene aesthetic. The Al-Malqa branch exemplifies this with its spacious, airy interior, a long fountain and large windows. Open around the clock, it functions equally well as a daytime workspace and an evening social spot. The menu is straightforward yet effective, featuring quality espresso drinks, a selection of cakes like the popular Namq cake, and simple savoury items.

Photo: Sunlight\_bowl/shutterstock

Address: Anas Ibn Malik Road, Al-Malqa, Riyadh

Internet: [www.namqcafe.com](http://www.namqcafe.com)

### ON OFF Coffee



ON OFF Coffee presents a modern, airy setting distinguished by its floor-to-ceiling windows and a central circular marble bar. This bright,

minimalist design creates an atmosphere suited for both focused work and casual socialising. Open all day and all night, the café reliably serves a selection of well-prepared coffee drinks and fresh pastries, including popular egg tarts.

Photo: Anna Pustynnikova/shutterstock

Address: Al-Imam Al-Shafei Street, Al-Manar, Riyadh

Internet: [onoffsa.com/en](http://onoffsa.com/en)

### Andarena Cafe



Andarena Café cultivates a deliberately cosy and intellectual atmosphere, reminiscent of a rustic library or a snug cabin. Its interior, featuring

chesterfield sofas and exposed brick, is designed for lingering over a book or quiet conversation. The coffee menu includes both classic preparations and specialty drinks like the Saudi Coffee Latte, complemented by a selection of desserts and light bites.

Photo: Thinnapob Proongsak/shutterstock

Address: Abi Jafar Al-Mansour Street, Ghirmatah, Riyadh

Internet: [www.instagram.com/andarena\\_coffee](http://www.instagram.com/andarena_coffee)

### Woods Café



Woods Café & Roastery is a home-grown brand that has become a staple for coffee aficionados in Riyadh. The airy, plant-filled interior, with

its high ceilings and views of Olaya Street, fosters a relaxed yet vibrant atmosphere. As a roastery, the focus is squarely on quality beans, offering a range of single-origin options and expertly prepared brews from V60 to a classic Spanish Latte. The menu extends to trendy pastries, including flat croissants and kunafa cheesecake, complementing the serious coffee focus. Open 24/7, it functions as a versatile spot for a quick espresso or a prolonged work session.

Photo: Mel Marketing/shutterstock

Address: Banban Street, Al-Olaya, Riyadh

Internet: [woodsksa.com](http://woodsksa.com)

### Dr. Café Coffee



From a small coffee kiosk in a shopping mall to an international chain. This is the story of Dr. Café, the outcome of the vision of its founder who, after having travelled a lot, made the fascinating red coffee berries the core of his business. In every Dr. Café in the city, you will find the best quality coffee and well-prepared staff.

Photo: abdulrahman aljerais/shutterstock

Address: Makkah Al-Mukarramah Road, Sulaimaniah, Riyadh

Phone: +966 59 482 8363

Internet: [drcafe.com/en-sa](http://drcafe.com/en-sa)

### Saadeddin Pastry



Saadeddin Pastry is a long-established bakery renowned for its extensive selection of Arabic treats, from baklava to gift boxes of dried fruits and cookies. While its primary focus remains on traditional confectionery, the attached café serves a broad menu that includes Western desserts, light meals, and coffee. The quiet, relaxed terrace provides a pleasant setting, and the service is consistently noted for its attentiveness, making it a versatile spot for a sweet indulgence or a casual outing.

Photo: Viacheslav Lopatin/shutterstock

Address: Prince Sultan Bin Abdulaziz Road, As Sulimaniyah, Riyadh

Phone: +966 9200 17070

Internet: [www.saadeddin.com](http://www.saadeddin.com)

### Munch Bakery



If you've got a sweet tooth, be sure to stop by the Munch Bakery. From cupcakes to muffins, you get everything sugary inside. Take a seat and enjoy your choice with a coffee or take home some cake. You shouldn't miss out on these mouthwatering delights.

Photo: goo922/shutterstock

Address: Prince Sultan Bin Abdulaziz Road, Al-Olaya, Riyadh

Phone: +966 9200 15010

Internet: [www.munchbakery.com/en](http://www.munchbakery.com/en)

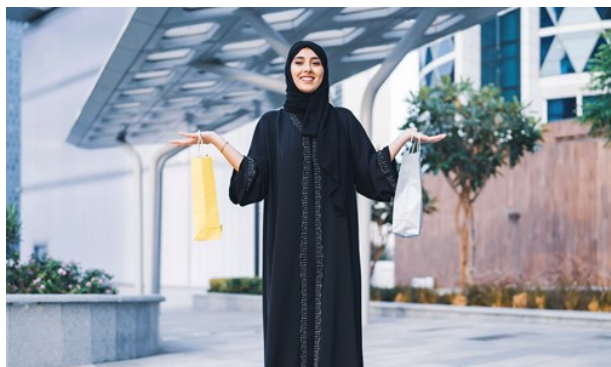
## BARS & NIGHTLIFE



Chaudhary Umair Ahmad/shutterstock

The cultural environment in Saudi Arabia is highly conservative. Religious law forbids the sale or consumption of alcohol throughout Saudi Arabia, so there are no bars or nightclubs. Instead, evening social activities are centred on shopping or dining out in one of the city's many restaurants or cafés whilst indulging in a delicious mocktail, a mix of fresh fruit juices, or a strong cup of Arabic coffee.

## SHOPPING



TAJ Photoz/shutterstock

Shopping is the number one pastime in Riyadh. Be it brand names or handmade, markets or malls, whatever you're looking for the traders of Riyadh will satisfy your desires. So if you're after the latest in tax-free designer lingerie or if your tastes are more inclined towards the traditional abaya, then grab your wallet, put on a pair of comfortable shoes and hit the streets of Riyadh. With over 60 shopping malls you could quite easily spend your entire holiday drifting from one mall to the next.

### Souq al-Zal



Souq al-Zal is one of Riyadh's oldest and most atmospheric marketplaces, a labyrinth of alleyways in the historic Al-Dirah district.

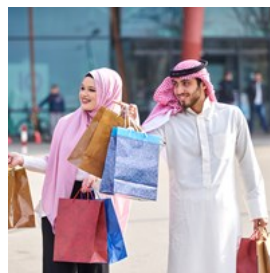
For generations, it has been a primary destination for carpets, oud, and incense, but its true character lies in its vast collection of antiques and curios. Vendors sell everything from rare coins and traditional musical instruments to old utensils and record players, creating the feeling of a sprawling, open-air museum. The air is thick with the scent of bukkhoor, and the sound of lively auctions fills the tiled walkways, offering an immersive journey into the city's commercial past.

Photo: JRP Studio/shutterstock

Address: Al-Cheikh Muhammad Ibn Ibrahim Street, Ad Dirah, Riyadh

Internet: [www.visitsaudi.com/en/riyadh/attractions/souq-al-zal-in-riyadh](http://www.visitsaudi.com/en/riyadh/attractions/souq-al-zal-in-riyadh)

### Tahlia Street



Tahlia Street, officially Prince Mohammed bin Abdulaziz Road, is the vibrant epicentre of modern Riyadh. A flagship project of the city's urban renewal, its wide, tree-lined pavements have been transformed into a bustling pedestrian promenade. By day, it caters to upscale shopping with a concentration of international luxury brands and sleek boutiques. As evening falls, the street truly comes to life; its countless cafés and gourmet restaurants spill onto the sidewalks, creating a lively, social atmosphere that lasts late into the night. More than just a retail strip, it functions as the city's primary open-air social lounge and a clear symbol of its contemporary urban identity.

Photo: Anel Alijagic/shutterstock

Address: Prince Muhammad bin Abdulaziz Road, Riyadh

### Riyadh Gallery Mall



Riyadh Gallery Mall is a comprehensive retail and leisure destination that has been a prominent feature in the city since 2007. Its vast, 38-acre complex houses a wide mix of international and local brands, catering to diverse shopping needs. The mall is designed as a full-day outing, with a spacious food court, family-friendly restaurants, and dedicated entertainment zones.

Photo: Nan Tun Nay/shutterstock

Address: King Fahd Road, Al-Malik Fahd, Riyadh  
Internet: [riyadhgallerymall.com](http://riyadhgallerymall.com)

### Riyadh Park Mall



Riyadh Park Mall positions itself as a modern lifestyle destination, distinguished by its contemporary architecture and

spacious, well-planned layout. The shopping experience is comprehensive, featuring a mix of high-end labels like Gucci and Dior alongside popular international retailers. Beyond retail, its appeal lies in being a full-scale leisure venue, with a diverse range of dining options, a state-of-the-art cinema and dedicated family entertainment areas.

Photo: Dean Bertoneclj/shutterstock

Address: Northern Ring Road, Al-Aqiq, Riyadh  
Internet: [www.instagram.com/riyadhpark\\_ksa](http://www.instagram.com/riyadhpark_ksa)

### Hayat Mall



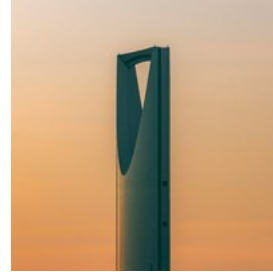
Hayat Mall is a long-established retail destination in Riyadh, known for its convenience and family-friendly focus. Its spacious, well-planned

layout houses over 450 stores, with a notable concentration on fashion, particularly ladies' wear. The mall provides a comprehensive experience with a varied food court, cafés and a cinema, catering to everyday shopping and leisure needs. While its design may feel more functional compared to newer, more luxurious malls, its reliable mix of brands, essential services, and ease of access continue to draw a loyal local clientele.

Photo: Freeograph/shutterstock

Address: King Abdulaziz Road, Al-Malik Fahd, Riyadh  
Internet: [www.hayat-mall.com](http://www.hayat-mall.com)

### Kingdom Centre Mall



Kingdom Centre Mall delivers a concentrated luxury retail experience within one of Riyadh's most iconic towers. The multi-level galleries are

dedicated to an impressive roster of high-end designers, including Louis Vuitton, Gucci and Cartier. Beyond shopping, the complex offers a premium cinema and a selection of cafés. While a more casual food court exists, the overall atmosphere is one of polished exclusivity. Its direct connection to the Four Seasons Hotel underscores its upmarket positioning, making it a definitive destination for high-fashion shopping in the city.

Photo: Ibrahim Abdullah/unsplash

Address: King Abdullah Road, King Fahd, Riyadh  
Phone: +966 1 211 2222  
Internet: [kingdomcentre.com.sa](http://kingdomcentre.com.sa)

### Granada Centre



The Granada Centre is a major retail destination on Riyadh's Eastern Ring Road, notable for its vast scale and comprehensive offerings. It houses

hundreds of stores, spanning international fashion, electronics, and home goods. A significant draw is the Reel Cinemas complex, which introduced a gourmet dining-in concept to the city's movie-going experience. The mall's spacious, well-planned layout includes a large food court and numerous cafés, making it a practical and popular choice for families seeking a full day of shopping, dining and entertainment.

Photo: Rawpixel/shutterstock

Address: East Ring Road, Exit 9, Riyadh

Internet: granadamall.info

### Jarir Bookstore



Jarir Bookstore is a local institution for everything from literature to the latest tech. Its extensive collection spans English and Arabic books

alongside a full range of phones, tablets, and electronics. The staff are known for being helpful, and the prices are consistently competitive, making it a reliable, one-stop destination for both entertainment and communication needs.

Photo: s8/shutterstock

Address: Olaya Street, Al-Olaya, Riyadh

Phone: +966 9200 00089

Internet: [www.jarir.com/sa-en](http://www.jarir.com/sa-en)

### Sahara Plaza



Sahara Plaza is a large, practical shopping centre in the King Fahd Quarter, housing around 180 stores. Its diverse retail mix includes international

brands, a Lulu hypermarket, and various dining options from a food court to casual restaurants. Recent renovations have enhanced the family appeal, adding a sizeable children's play area and a Vox cinema. Its accessibility, bolstered by proximity to a metro station, makes it a convenient and popular retail destination for everyday needs and leisure.

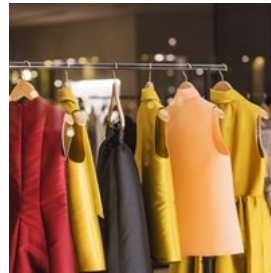
Photo: Creative Lab/shutterstock

Address: King Abdulaziz Road, King Fahd, Riyadh

Phone: +966 11 452 0400

Internet: [www.instagram.com/saharamall\\_sa](http://www.instagram.com/saharamall_sa)

### Panorama Mall



Panorama Mall presents a comprehensive and upmarket shopping experience in Riyadh. Its modern complex houses a curated selection of

high-end international brands, with a notable focus on fashion, beauty, and wellness.

Family-oriented entertainment is a key draw, featuring dedicated children's attractions. The diverse food court and cafés, including several well-known international names, provide ample options for refreshment.

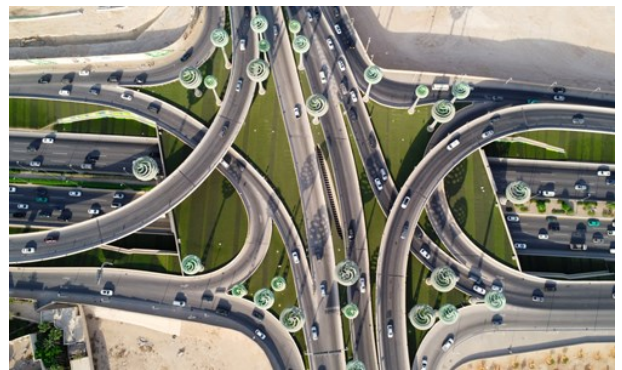
Photo: Creative Lab/Shutterstock

Address: Ashiqar, Al-Mathar Ash Shamali, Riyadh

Phone: +966 92 000 9467

Internet: [www.hamat.sa/en/panorama-mall](http://www.hamat.sa/en/panorama-mall)

## TOURIST INFORMATION



Ayman Zaid/shutterstock

### Riyadh King Khalid International Airport (RUH)



King Khalid International Airport is located 35 kilometres from central Riyadh. The journey to the city centre takes approximately 30 minutes

by authorised airport taxi, which are available

around the clock.

For a sustainable and efficient alternative, the Riyadh Metro now connects the airport to the city. Use Line 4 to reach the King Abdullah Financial District in about 40 minutes. Plan your journey and pay for fares digitally using the official "Darb" app for a seamless travel experience.

Photo: Rawpixel/shutterstock

Address: Riyadh Airport Road, Riyadh

Phone: +966 92 002 0090

Internet: [www.kkia.sa/en](http://www.kkia.sa/en)

### Best Time to Visit



The incredibly hot summers of Saudi Arabia, with temperatures often going above the 40°C mark, make the country one of the driest in the world. The unbearable heat, from April to October, makes it difficult to undertake continuous outdoor exploration.

A trip to Saudi Arabia is best planned for the period between November and March. During those months, daytime temperatures tend to be cooler and significantly more comfortable.

Photo: Benny Marty/shutterstock

### Passport & Visa



Nationals from countries like the United States, the UK, Canada, and most European Union member states must apply for an e-visa online in order to enter Jeddah. Certain nationalities, including citizens from Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)

countries like the UAE, Bahrain and Kuwait, enjoy visa-free entry. For those not eligible for e-visas, Saudi Arabia offers a visa-on-arrival option for select nationalities, although this is less common and typically depends on the purpose of the visit.

To secure a visa, travellers can apply through the Saudi Arabian embassy or consulate in their home country, or use the online platform for e-visas.

Photo: Ahmad Faizal/shutterstock

Internet: [e-visa-express.com/en/saudi-arabia](http://e-visa-express.com/en/saudi-arabia)

### Cultural Norms



Make sure you wear the appropriate attire when strolling and exploring the city. Women must be covered from neck to ankle, and in certain areas scarves are used to cover the face and head. Shorts and tank tops should not be worn outside of your accommodation by women. For men, loose clothing is recommended, and shorts are prohibited.

When visiting, please make sure you respect and abide by the laws and culture of the country.

Photo: Utsman Media/unsplash

### Public Transport



Riyadh's public transport network has been transformed by two major systems. The Riyadh Bus service is a comprehensive network with over 50 routes, including a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system launched in 2023.

Complementing this is the Riyadh Metro, the world's longest driverless system. Its six lines span 176 kilometres, connecting 85 stations across the city.

Photo: M. Sadoon/shutterstock  
Internet: [www.saptco.com.sa/en](http://www.saptco.com.sa/en)  
Email: [info@saptco.com.sa](mailto:info@saptco.com.sa)

### Taxi



Taxis in Riyadh are usually metered. You can hail a cab on the street, and it is acceptable for women to do so.

Ride-sharing apps like Uber and Careem are widely used and offer a convenient way to navigate the city.

Photo: John Grummitt/shutterstock

### Post



In Riyadh, post offices are usually open from 8am to 4pm, Sunday to Thursday, aligning with the standard workweek in Saudi Arabia. Some

branches may also be open on Saturdays. Services typically include mailing and parcel delivery, financial transactions and the sale of postal supplies.

Photo: Yasser Mutwakil/unsplash  
Address: SPL Head Office, Gate 4, 8100 Rihana Bint Zaid Street, Al-Aarid, Riyadh  
Internet: [splonline.com.sa/en](http://splonline.com.sa/en)

### Pharmacy



In Riyadh, several prominent pharmacy chains cater to various healthcare needs including Al-Dawaa Pharmacies (one of the largest and most well-known chains in Saudi Arabia) and United Pharmacies.

If you need urgent medical care, head to Care Medical Hospital in Al-Rawabi.

Photo: New Africa/shutterstock  
Address: Orange Pharmacy, 4515 Ibn Hazm Street, Western Al-Urayja, Riyadh  
Internet: [www.orangepharmacy.sa/en](http://www.orangepharmacy.sa/en)

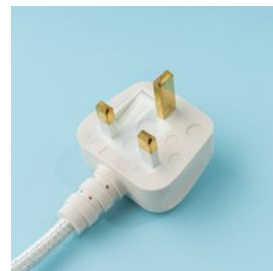
### Telephone



Country code: +966 Area code: (0)11

Photo: patpitchaya/shutterstock

### Electricity



Saudi Arabia operates on a 230V supply voltage and 60Hz. The plug type associated with the country is type G, just like in the UK, Ireland, Cyprus, Malta, Malaysia, Singapore and Hong Kong.

Photo: Muhammad Safuan/shutterstock

### Population

7.8 million

### Currency

1 riyal (SAR) = 100 halalas

#### Opening hours

The working week is generally from Sunday through Thursday with some businesses open Saturday mornings. Government offices are open 7:30am–2:30pm, banks: 9:30am–4:30pm.

#### Internet

[www.visitsaudi.com/en/riyadh](http://www.visitsaudi.com/en/riyadh)

#### Newspapers

Saudi Gazette: [www.saudigazette.com.sa](http://www.saudigazette.com.sa)

Arab News: [www.arabnews.com](http://www.arabnews.com)

#### Emergency numbers

Police: 999

Fire: 998

Ambulance: 997

#### Tourist information

Tourism Development Fund (TDF)

3, KAFA, Floor 11, building 305, Area, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

Open Sun–Thu 9am–4:30pm, Sat & Sun closed

+966 92 001 1552

[tdf.gov.sa/en](http://tdf.gov.sa/en)

