PACK LIGHTLY

A GULF CITY-STATE

Kuwait

Waterfront towers, old pearling souqs, and a dining-and-desert culture the guidebooks skip.



p. 21 The route picker: build your long weekend

p. 27 What a day really costs, printed as a till receipt

p. 13 Failaka Island, and how to make the crossing

42 PAGES · USD PRICES · E-VISA, 90 DAYS · EDITION 2026.07

photo: Wikimedia Commons

Start here

the shape of a Kuwait trip, what it costs, what to sort first


KUWAIT CITY FROM THE WATER

Kuwait is a small, wealthy Gulf city-state, and a trip here is really a city break with desert and island day trips attached. It gets few tourists, which is part of the appeal: the old souqs, the waterfront towers and the pearl-diving heritage sit alongside the Gulf's mall-and-dining culture with almost no crowds. Come in winter, base in the city, and give it a long weekend rather than a fortnight. This guide covers the waterfront, the souqs and museums, the neighbourhoods where people actually spend their evenings, and the trips out to Failaka and the desert.

The shape of a trip

A city base for three or four days: the waterfront and towers, the old souqs and museums, the malls and marinas, and one day out to Failaka Island or the desert.

What a day costs

This is a Gulf country, not a backpacker one. Budget days run about 60 USD, mid-range around 120, captured for this edition. The full receipt is on page 27.

Sort before you fly

Most passports need a quick, cheap e-visa, so check yours. Come November to March; the summer is brutal. It is a dry country, so pack no expectations of a bar.


DINNER, THE NATIONAL DISH



THE OLD SOUQ

HOW THE LINKS WORK

Some booking links earn Pack Lightly a commission, at no extra cost to you. Full disclosure is on the last page.

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QUICK JUMPS

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Failaka Island day trip 13

Your trip on one page

3-4 days · 60 to 280 USD/day · best Nov to Mar

If you read nothing else, this page is the trip. Kuwait is a city break, not a tour: base in Kuwait City and spend your days in themes rather than moving hotels. Waterfront and towers, then the old souqs and museums, then the malls and marinas, and one day out to Failaka Island or the desert. Come in the cool months and budget from the bars below; Gulf prices are real.

THE PLAN, BY DAY

Waterfront — day 1

in the city

Souqs + museums — day 2

in the city

Malls + marina — day 3

day trip

Failaka or desert — day 4

BUDGET PER DAY

Budget	60 USD
Mid-range	120 USD
Comfort	280 USD

BOOK FIRST

01	International flights, 6 to 8 weeks out	Aviasales
02	A central city hotel for the whole stay	Booking
03	e-visa online, then an eSIM	Saily

BEST MONTHS

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec

best: warm and dry · shoulder: getting hot · brutal summer heat

Kuwait is dry: alcohol is banned entirely, for everyone. Evenings run on cafes, shisha, malls and long dinners instead.

Summer is genuinely dangerous heat, over 50C. This is a strict winter destination; come between November and March.

Kuwait at a glance

scores 0-100 · pack-lightly country-comparison data

SCORECARD

Safety	80
Hotel quality	75
Food and drinks	65
Tourist infrastructure	60
Culture	55
Budget friendly	40

Budget travel	60 USD/day
Mid-range	120 USD/day
Luxury	280 USD/day

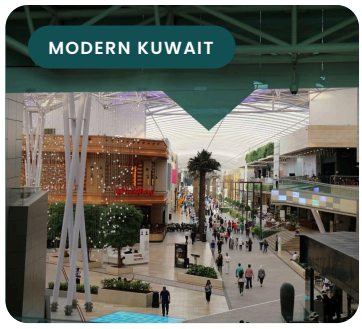
CITY · WATERFRONT · DINING · HERITAGE · DESERT

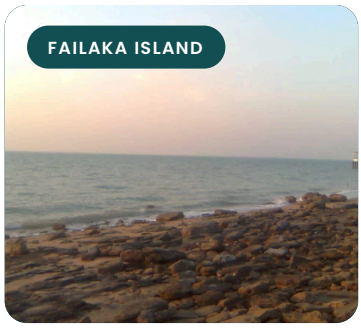
source: country-comparison tool, 2026-07

SIX FRAMES OF THE TRIP













01

The country

What Kuwait is, how oil and pearls shaped it, and the parts of a small state you actually visit.

IN THIS CHAPTER

What Kuwait is 07

From pearls to oil 08

01

What Kuwait is

4M people · a city-state · the quiet corner of the Gulf

A small, flat, oil-rich emirate at the head of the Arabian Gulf, about the size of a large city and home to some four million people, most of them expatriate workers. Kuwait City holds almost everything: the government, the towers, the souqs and the malls, ringed by residential suburbs and, beyond them, open desert. It is one of the least-touristed countries in the Gulf, more conservative and lower-key than Dubai or Doha, with no beach-resort scene and a strict ban on alcohol. What it offers instead is an authentic, uncrowded Gulf city: real pearling heritage, serious food, and a warm, curious welcome to the few travelers who come.

CAPITAL	POPULATION	CURRENCY	BEST MONTHS
Kuwait City	**~4M**	**KWD**	**Nov-Mar**
holds almost everything	mostly expatriate	1 KWD = ~3.25 USD	warm and dry

THREE PARTS OF A SMALL STATE



The waterfront and old city

towers · corniche · souqs

The heart of any visit. The Kuwait Towers, the Gulf corniche, Seif Palace and the old Mubarakiya souq are all here.



The neighbourhoods and malls

Salmiya · Fahaheel · marinas

Where Kuwait actually spends its evenings: the huge Avenues mall, the Salmiya seafront, and the Al Kout marina down at Fahaheel.



The edges: island and desert

Failaka · Mutla · Al Jahra

The day trips: the ruins of Failaka Island by ferry, and the winter desert and Red Fort out toward Al Jahra.

01

From pearls to oil

the story that explains the city

Kuwait's story is written on its waterfront. For centuries this was a pearling and dhow-trading port, one of the busiest in the Gulf, and the wooden boats and diving heritage still anchor the national identity. Oil, struck in the 1930s and flowing from the 1940s, turned a modest port into one of the richest states on earth within a generation, and built the towers and highways you see today. The 1990 Iraqi invasion and the 1991 liberation are recent, raw history, marked by the Liberation Tower and a strong sense of national pride. Understanding that arc, from pearls to oil to occupation and back, makes the museums and the monuments read as more than sights.

OLD TRADE
Pearls
and dhow shipping

OIL SINCE
1946
first exports

LIBERATION
1991
recent, living history

FAITH
Islam
a dry, observant state

Start at the Maritime Museum or the dhow harbour to see the pearling roots before the towers, and the modern city makes more sense.

The 1990 invasion is within living memory. It is fine to visit the memorials; be thoughtful raising it in conversation.

GO DEEPER

The wider culture in the culture page and the top picks in best places.

02

Where to go

The waterfront and the old souqs, the neighbourhoods where the city lives, and the island and desert day trips out of town.

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The souqs and old town 11

Salmiya, Fahaheel and the malls 12

Failaka Island 13

The desert and Al Jahra 14

The waterfront

towers and corniche · the day everyone does first



Start where the city faces the sea. The Kuwait Towers, the blue-globed landmark on the corniche, have a viewing sphere and are the image of the country; go up at dusk. From there the waterfront runs for kilometres past Al Shaheed Park, a landscaped green roof over museums, and the Grand Mosque, whose interior can be visited on a free guided tour. Add the Liberation Tower, one of the tallest in the region, and the blue-tiled clock tower of Seif Palace seen from outside. A single relaxed day covers the lot, best in the cool of the afternoon and evening.

THE WATERFRONT CIRCUIT

- [ ] **Kuwait Towers.** The viewing sphere at dusk, the classic shot.
- [ ] **Grand Mosque.** Free guided tours; dress modestly.
- [ ] **Al Shaheed Park.** Green roof, museums, evening walks.
- [ ] **Liberation Tower.** The skyline marker, seen across the city.

Do the waterfront late afternoon into evening. Midday sun off the Gulf is fierce even in winter, and the towers glow at dusk.

Grand Mosque tours are free but need modest dress; abayas are lent at the door for women.

MORE ON THE SITE

The capital in the Kuwait City guide and the landmarks in best places.

photo: Wikimedia Commons

The souqs and old town

Mubarakiya and the museums · the real character



The old heart of Kuwait is Souq Al-Mubarakiya, a covered maze of spice, gold, textile and perfume lanes that has traded for over two centuries and comes alive in the evening. It is the best eating in the city too, with old tea houses and grill stalls between the shops. Around it sit the museums that tell the country's story: the National Museum and its planetarium, the private Tareq Rajab collections of Islamic art and instruments, and the dhow harbour where the pearling boats were built. This is the district that rewards slow wandering rather than a tick-list.

IN THE OLD TOWN

- [ ] **Souq Al-Mubarakiya.** Spice, gold and grills; go in the evening.
- [ ] **National Museum.** The country's story and a planetarium.
- [ ] **Tareq Rajab Museum.** Private Islamic art and instruments.
- [ ] **Dhow harbour.** The wooden boats and pearling heritage.

→

Mubarakiya is an evening place. Come after 6pm when the stalls open, the crowds arrive and the grills fire up.

☰

Eat here at least once: the old tea houses and kebab stalls in the souq beat the mall food courts on character and price.

MORE ON THE SITE

Old-town detail in the Kuwait City guide and the wider culture in culture.

photo: Wikimedia Commons

Salmiya, Fahaheel and the malls

where the city spends its evenings



In a hot, dry country, the mall is the town square, and Kuwait does them on a grand scale. The Avenues is one of the largest in the region, a city under one roof with themed districts and every brand. Beyond the shopping, the coastal suburbs are where locals actually relax: Salmiya has the seafront and the Scientific Center with its aquarium and dhow-shaped hall, and down the coast at Fahaheel the Al Kout marina mixes shops, restaurants and a fountain promenade. Green Island, a small landscaped artificial island on the corniche, rounds out the modern-leisure side of the city.





The malls are genuinely how Kuwait socialises, not a tourist trap. Evenings and weekends are the liveliest time to see it.

A car helps here; the sights are spread along the coast. Taxis and ride apps work, but distances add up without one.

MORE ON THE SITE

The suburbs in Salmiya and Fahaheel.

Failaka Island

the day trip by ferry · ruins and recent history



The one real excursion off the mainland is Failaka, an island in the Gulf with layers of history most visitors never expect. There are Bronze Age and Greek ruins here, left by Alexander the Great's men who called it Ikaros, alongside an eerier recent past: the island was occupied and depopulated in 1990 and never fully resettled, so abandoned villages and shot-up buildings sit among the archaeology. A ferry runs from Kuwait City, and a half or full day covers the sites, usually with a guide or a booked tour. It is the most atmospheric thing you can do here.

Check the ferry timetable before you go; sailings are limited and seasonal. A booked island tour bundles the crossing and transport.

There is little shade and less infrastructure. Bring water, sun cover and closed shoes for the rubble around the ruins.

MORE ON THE SITE

The island in the Failaka guide and more in off the beaten path.

photo: Wikimedia Commons

The desert and Al Jahra

winter camps and open sand · the local escape



In the cool months Kuwaitis head to the desert, pitching elaborate weekend camps out on the sand for the whole winter season. For a visitor it is the most local thing you can do: a day or an overnight with a camp operator, with fires, food, and quad bikes on the dunes. The landscape is subtle rather than dramatic, flat gravel plains and low ridges like Mutla, but the culture around it is the draw. Nearer town, Al Jahra has the Red Fort, a mudbrick stronghold from a 1920 battle, and the marshes and mudflats draw migrating flamingos in winter.

Desert camping is a winter-only, weekend affair. Go with a licensed camp operator; the open desert is easy to get lost or stuck in.

Birders should time Al Jahra's pools for winter, when flamingos and migrants gather on the mudflats.

MORE ON THE SITE

The wilder side in off the beaten path and the coast in beaches.

photo: Wikimedia Commons

03

What to do

The heritage that anchors the city, the dining-and-cafe culture that fills its evenings, what to eat, and where to sleep.

IN THIS CHAPTER

Museums and heritage 16

Dining and cafe culture 17

Food spotlight 18

Where to stay 19

Museums and heritage

pearls, dhows and the recent past



Kuwait takes its history seriously, and the museums are the best way into it. The story runs from pearling and dhow-building, still visible at the harbour where the wooden boats are made, through the oil boom to the 1990 occupation. The National Museum and its planetarium cover the sweep of it; the private Tareq Rajab museums hold a world-class collection of Islamic art, calligraphy and musical instruments; and the Scientific Center on the Salmiya waterfront pairs a big aquarium with a dhow-shaped hall. Between them they turn a shopping-and-towers stopover into a proper cultural trip.





The Tareq Rajab museums are easy to miss and among the best in the Gulf. Check opening days; they keep their own hours.

Many museums close for the long afternoon and reopen in the evening. Plan culture for morning and late, malls for the heat of the day.

GO DEEPER

The heritage in the culture page and the highlights in best places.

photos: Wikimedia Commons

Dining and cafe culture

the real nightlife of a dry country


THE CORNICHE, AFTER DARK

With no bars and brutal daytime heat, Kuwait's social life runs on food and coffee, and it does both seriously. The city has one of the most ambitious restaurant scenes in the Gulf, from third-wave coffee roasters and dessert cafes to high-end takes on Kuwaiti and regional cooking. Evenings mean long dinners, shisha lounges, and slow walks on the corniche once the sun drops. The mall food halls are part of it, but the better eating is in the standalone cafes and the old souq grills. Treat dining as the main event here, because for locals it is.

HOW THE EVENING WORKS

- [ ] **Coffee first.** The specialty-cafe scene is genuinely good.
- [ ] **Souq grills.** Cheap, old-school kebabs in Mubarakiya.
- [ ] **Corniche walk.** The whole city strolls the seafront after dark.
- [ ] **Shisha and dessert.** The late-night default; no alcohol anywhere.

There is no alcohol anywhere, at any price. Do not try to bring it in; penalties are serious. The mocktail scene is very good instead.

The city eats late. Restaurants fill from 8 or 9pm, and cafes stay busy past midnight, especially on weekends.

GO DEEPER

The food scene in food and drinks and the culture in the culture page.

photo: Wikimedia Commons

Food spotlight

Gulf cooking, and what it costs

Kuwaiti food is Gulf food at its richest: spiced rice, slow-cooked meat and fish, and a serious sweet tooth. Machboos, fragrant rice with meat or fish, is the national dish and the thing to order first. Meals often start with gahwa, cardamom coffee, and dates. Prices are Gulf-level, well above the neighbouring stans. Below is what you will actually eat, with typical restaurant prices.

DISH	WHAT IT IS	PRICE
Machboos	Spiced rice with meat or fish, the national dish	USD 7-16
Mutabbaq samak	Fried fish over spiced rice, a Gulf classic	USD 16-39
Margoog	Vegetable and meat stew with dough	USD 7-16
Harees	Slow-cooked wheat and meat porridge	USD 7-13
Balaleet	Sweet-savoury vermicelli, a breakfast	USD 5-12
Gahwa and dates	Cardamom coffee and dates, the welcome	USD 3-6

prices from the local-food-and-drinks dataset, captured 2026-06



MACHBOOS, THE NATIONAL DISH



GAHWA AND GULF SWEETS

See the full dish list with photos, regional variants and prices in the free food tool on pack-lightly.com.

Open What to Eat and Drink

Where to stay

prices per night, double room · city or seafront

One base does the whole trip; you will not move hotels. Kuwait City puts you near the waterfront, the souqs and the museums. Salmiya, along the coast, trades a little central access for the seafront, the Scientific Center and easy dining. Both are well served by hotels; there is little hostel scene, so budget here means a simple hotel rather than a dorm. Book the whole stay ahead.

Kuwait City

budget 40 USD mid 90 USD comfort 220 USD

Central for the towers, corniche and souq. Check what a central room costs, with the wider search on Hostelworld.

Salmiya

budget 40 USD mid 85 USD comfort 200 USD

On the coast for the seafront, the Scientific Center and dining. See what Salmiya is charging, or the wider search on Hostelworld.

City hotels with free cancellation, plus the odd Failaka and desert tour, book easily online.

Find Stays on Booking.com

04

Routes and itineraries

Ready-made trips by how long you have, a day-by-day long weekend, and the map of a small country's day trips.

IN THIS CHAPTER

The route picker 21

A long weekend, day by day 22

The map of day trips 23

The route picker

find the closest trip to yours, then adjust

Six trips by length and style. Totals are per person unless noted, on-the-ground costs excluding international flights, using this edition's prices. This is a Gulf country, so budgets sit higher than the neighbouring stans.

LAYOVER · 2D · BUDGET

The waterfront and souq

USD 130 · simple hotel + taxis

- Towers and corniche
- Mubarakiya souq
- Grand Mosque tour

LONG WEEKEND · 4D · MID

The full city plus a day trip

USD 400 · the standard visit

- Waterfront + souq + museums
- Malls and coast
- Failaka or desert day

CULTURE · 4D · MID

Heritage-first

USD 450 · museums and history

- National + Tareq Rajab
- Dhow harbour + souq
- Failaka ruins

FAMILY · 4D · MID

Aquarium, malls and sand

USD 1,600 · family of 4

- Scientific Center aquarium
- Green Island + The Avenues
- A gentle desert day

COMFORT · 4D · HIGH

Five-star and fine dining

USD 1,400 for 2 · the plush version

- Seafront five-star
- Chef restaurants + cafes
- Private city + island tour

STOPOVER · 3D · MID

City and a night in the sand

USD 500 · adds a desert camp

- Waterfront + souq
- Winter desert camp overnight
- Malls to finish

A long weekend, day by day

four days · city themes plus one day out

Kuwait is a four-day country, done from one hotel. Structure the days by theme rather than by moving around, save the outdoors for the last day, and shift sightseeing to the cool morning and evening hours.

1	**The waterfront** towers + corniche	Grand Mosque tour in the morning, Al Shaheed Park, then the Kuwait Towers and a corniche walk at dusk.
2	**Old town and museums** Mubarakiya + heritage	National Museum and Tareq Rajab by day, the dhow harbour, then dinner and shopping in the Mubarakiya souq.
3	**Coast and malls** Salmiya + Fahaheel	Scientific Center aquarium, the Salmiya seafront, The Avenues in the afternoon heat, Al Kout marina at night.
4	**Failaka or the desert** the day out	The ferry to Failaka's ruins, or a winter desert camp with quad bikes and lunch. Last dinner back in the city.

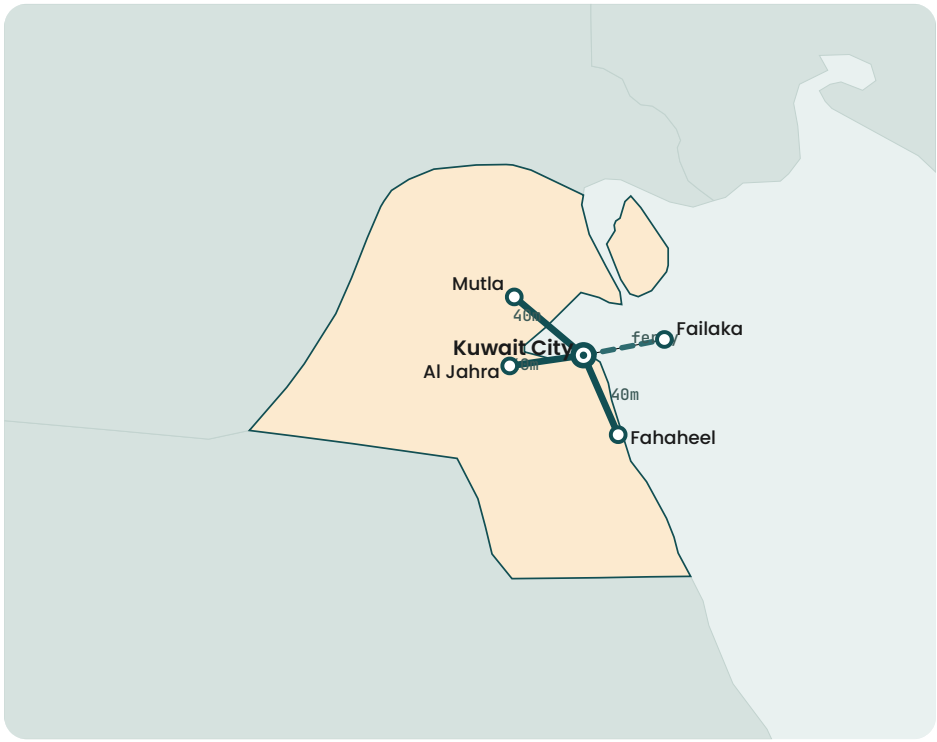
Friday is the quiet day: many shops and offices close for prayers until the afternoon, then the malls and souq come alive.

Only got 48 hours? Drop the coast-and-malls day and keep the waterfront, the souq, and either Failaka or the desert.

The map of day trips

one city, everything within reach

The whole country fits inside a day's driving. Base in Kuwait City and everything is a short hop: the desert and Al Jahra to the west, Fahaheel down the coast, and Failaka Island a ferry ride out into the Gulf.



WHAT THE TRIPS COST AND TAKE

TRIP	MODE	TIME	COST
Around Kuwait City	Taxi or ride app	10–30m	USD 3-8
City to Failaka Island	Ferry, return	1–1.5h each way	USD 10-18
City to Al Jahra or Fahaheel	Road	40m	car or taxi
Desert camp day or overnight	Guided 4x4	full day	tour USD 60-120

fares captured 2026-06; a rental car is cheap here and fuel is among the world's lowest

05

When to go

Why this is a strict winter destination, the festivals that fill February, and what a day really costs at Gulf prices.

IN THIS CHAPTER

Weather, crowds, price 25

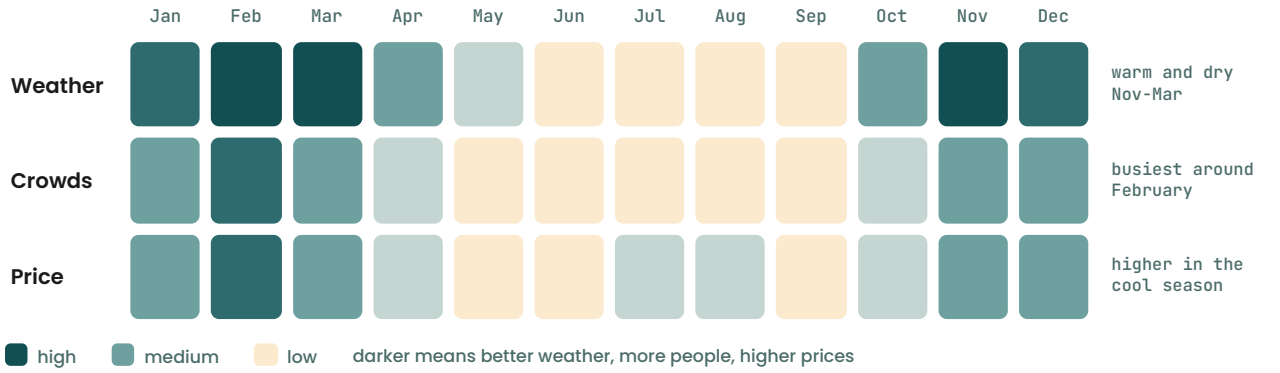
Festivals worth timing 26

What a day costs 27

Weather, crowds, price

12-month calendar · a hard summer, a fine winter

Kuwait's calendar is simple: come in winter, avoid summer entirely. From November to March the days are warm and dry and the evenings pleasant, perfect for the corniche and the desert camping season. From May to September the heat is genuinely dangerous, regularly over 45C and among the hottest inhabited places on earth, with dust storms in the shoulder months. There is no rainy season to speak of. Plan a winter trip and treat any warm-month visit as an indoor, mall-and-museum affair.



source: best-travel-time dataset and country-comparison, captured 2026-06

Summer here is a genuine health risk, not just uncomfortable. If you must come May to September, plan an indoor trip.

Spring can bring dust storms that grey out the sky for a day. They pass quickly, but keep the schedule flexible.

Festivals worth timing

the dates that change what you see



The season and the festivals line up neatly: the best months are also when the city celebrates. February is the peak, with a month-long festival and the back-to-back National and Liberation days filling the streets.

THE CALENDAR

- [ ] **Hala Febrayer, February.** A month-long festival of shopping, concerts and events, with a big carnival parade.
- [ ] **National Day, 25 February.** Independence celebrations, decorations and foam-and-water street parties.
- [ ] **Liberation Day, 26 February.** Marks the 1991 liberation, back-to-back with National Day.
- [ ] **Ramadan, dates shift yearly.** Days are quiet and many places close; nights come alive with ghabga gatherings and food.
- [ ] **Desert season, November to March.** Not a festival but a way of life: the winter camping culture out on the sand.

GO DEEPER

Dates and closures in the public holidays page and the month-by-month picture in best travel time.

photo: Wikimedia Commons

What a day costs

three travel styles · printed the way the day spends it

Daily budgets hide in averages, so here is the day itemized instead: a bed, meals, getting around, one thing worth doing, and a coffee at the end. Three real versions of the same day in Kuwait. Gulf prices sit well above the neighbouring stans.

A DAY IN KUWAIT

* budget *

simple hotel	35.00
cafe breakfast	4.00
shawarma lunch	6.00
souq grill dinner	7.00
taxi or ride app	5.00
museum entry	3.00
TOTAL / DAY	**~60 USD**

country-comparison data · 2026-06

A DAY IN KUWAIT

* mid-range *

4-star double, half	65.00
hotel breakfast	incl.
cafe lunch	12.00
restaurant dinner	20.00
rides or car	8.00
activity or tour	10.00
specialty coffee	5.00
TOTAL / DAY	**~120 USD**

country-comparison data · 2026-06

A DAY IN KUWAIT

* comfort *

5-star seafront, half	180.00
hotel breakfast	incl.
restaurant lunch	20.00
fine dinner	45.00
private driver, half day	20.00
private tour	10.00
coffee and extras	5.00
TOTAL / DAY	**~280 USD**

country-comparison data · 2026-06

Run the same numbers for your own dates, group size and currency in the free budget calculator on pack-lightly.com.

Open the Budget Calculator

06

Practical

Visa, money, getting around, eSIM, health, packing. The boring parts you only read once. Done right, you never think about them again.

IN THIS CHAPTER

Book in this order 29

Money and transport 30

Bed, bag, signal 31

Health basics 32

Book in this order

four things before you fly · the rest on arrival

Kuwait is a simple, well-run country to organise. There are no permits, no internal flights to book, and taxis and tours are easy to arrange once you land. Four things are worth sorting ahead, and the e-visa is the one people leave too late.

8 wk before

International flights

Kuwait is a hub for its own airline and well connected via Gulf and European carriers. Fares soften six to eight weeks out.

Compare fares on Aviasales

4 wk before

e-visa + insurance

Most nationalities apply online for a cheap e-visa, approved in days; check yours, as a few still need it on arrival. Buy travel insurance and keep your passport valid six months beyond entry.

Check entry rules per passport

2 wk before

A central hotel for the stay

You will not move base, so lock one well-placed city hotel for the whole trip. Book early for February, the busiest month.

Book a hotel on Booking.com

1 wk before

eSIM

Install before departure, activate on arrival. Coverage is excellent across the small country; 5 to 10 GB covers a long weekend of maps and ride apps.

Set up a Saily eSIM

Apply for the e-visa on the official government portal only, and print the approval. A few nationalities get it visa-free or on arrival; check first.

Do not pack alcohol, even duty-free. It is confiscated at customs and can mean a fine; the country is entirely dry.

Money and transport

a strong currency, cheap fuel · taxis and rental cars

The Kuwaiti dinar is one of the world's strongest currencies, so the numbers look small but add up fast. Cards work almost everywhere and ATMs are plentiful; carry a little cash for the souq and taxis. There is no metro. Getting around means taxis and ride apps, or a rental car, which is cheap and easy with the world's lowest fuel prices, ideal for the day trips. The one boat you might take is the Failaka ferry.

ITEM	BUDGET	MID	COMFORT
Bed, simple to 5-star	USD 35	USD 90	USD 220
Meal out	USD 6	USD 18	USD 45
Taxi or ride across town	USD 4	USD 7	USD 12
Rental car per day	USD 25	USD 35	USD 60
Failaka ferry, return	USD 10	USD 14	USD 18

verified 2026-06 · per-category detail in the budget guide

GETTING AROUND: WHAT BEATS WHAT

For a short city trip, ride apps and taxis cover everything, and the airport run is quick and cheap. If you plan the desert and coast day trips, a rental car is the smart move: petrol costs almost nothing, parking is easy, and the distances are short. Driving is fast and assertive, so take it steady. There is no rail or metro, and city buses are aimed at commuters rather than visitors, so do not build a plan around them. Read the road notes in the driving page before you rent.

THE FULL PICTURE

Cash and card detail in the currency rundown, the full cost model in budget saving, and road rules in the driving page.

Bed, bag, signal

hotels · packing · eSIM, the three solved problems

BED

Kuwait is a hotel country, not a hostel one. Booking.com has the deepest inventory from simple city hotels to seafront five-stars, with free cancellation on most. There is a thin budget scene, so the cheapest comfortable option is a modest business hotel rather than a dorm; the wider search on Hostelworld covers what little there is.

BAG: THE WINTER CITY-BREAK LIST

- [ ] Light layers for warm days, a jacket for cold evenings
- [ ] Modest clothing: covered shoulders and knees, more so for women
- [ ] A scarf for the Grand Mosque and conservative areas
- [ ] Sun hat, sunglasses, SPF; the Gulf light is strong
- [ ] Comfortable shoes for souq and museum days
- [ ] Closed shoes for the Failaka ruins and desert
- [ ] Type G plug adapter, 240V (UK-style)
- [ ] A card for daily life and a little cash for the souq
- [ ] No alcohol, at all, in your luggage
- [ ] A power bank and offline maps for the day trips

Signal. Install an eSIM before you fly and activate on arrival. Coverage is excellent across the small country. Local Zain, Ooredoo or STC SIMs are easy to buy with a passport if you prefer.

Set up a Saily eSIM

06

GO DEEPER The full list in the packing list, dress detail in clothes, and plans compared in the eSIM write-up.

Health basics

six weeks out · the heat is the only real risk

Kuwait is a very low-risk health destination with excellent, modern healthcare. There is no malaria, the water is desalinated and safe to drink though most people prefer bottled, and pharmacies are everywhere and well stocked. The one genuine hazard is the heat. The list below is everything that actually needs doing, in order.

THE SHORT LIST

- [ ] **Heat:** in the warm months, hydrate hard, stay indoors midday, and treat over-45C days as dangerous.
- [ ] **Six weeks before:** travel-clinic visit. Confirm routine vaccines (MMR, DPT, flu) are current.
- [ ] **Recommended:** Hepatitis A and typhoid as standard travel cover; nothing exotic is needed.
- [ ] **Water:** tap water is desalinated and safe, though bottled is the norm and tastes better.
- [ ] **Pack:** sun protection, rehydration salts, and any personal medication with a prescription copy.
- [ ] **Insurance:** standard travel cover is fine; private care is excellent but expensive without it.

IF SOMETHING GOES WRONG

Kuwait has high-quality private hospitals and clinics, English-speaking and used to expatriate patients. Pharmacies (saydaliya) handle minor issues over the counter and many run 24 hours. Note that some common medicines, including certain painkillers and cold remedies, are controlled here, so carry a prescription for anything unusual. Dial 112 for all emergencies.

READ ON Any shots in the vaccinations breakdown and cover compared in the travel insurance rundown.

07

Safe and smart

Why crime is a non-issue and the law is what to mind, the etiquette that is load-bearing, and the language minimum that helps.

IN THIS CHAPTER

Staying smart 34

Etiquette: do and do not 35

Language and emergencies 36

Staying smart

crime is rare, the rules are what to know

Kuwait is one of the safest countries you can visit: violent crime against tourists is very rare and petty theft is uncommon. What catches visitors out is not danger but the law and the customs of a conservative, dry, Muslim country. Get these four right and the trip is smooth.

WATCH 01

The alcohol ban

Alcohol is completely illegal to import, buy, sell or drink. Duty-free bottles are confiscated and penalties are real.

The fix: leave it at home. Enjoy the excellent mocktail and coffee scene instead; nobody is drinking.

WATCH 02

Dress and public behaviour

Revealing clothing draws stares, and public displays of affection can cause real trouble.

The fix: cover shoulders and knees, more so for women, and keep affection private. Malls and hotels are relaxed; the street less so.

WATCH 03

Ramadan in daylight

During Ramadan, eating, drinking or smoking in public in daytime is an offence, for visitors too.

The fix: if you visit in Ramadan, be discreet by day and enjoy the food-filled nights. Many places close until sunset.

WATCH 04

The roads

The one real safety risk is traffic: fast, assertive driving and a high accident rate.

The fix: wear a seatbelt, drive defensively, and use ride apps rather than renting if you are not confident.

MORE ON THE SITE

The full safety and law picture in the safety breakdown and road detail in the driving page.

Etiquette: the short list

first four are load-bearing · the rest smooth the day

Eight things that matter. The first four keep you on the right side of law and custom; the rest simply make you a welcome guest. Kuwaitis are warm and hospitable to the few travelers who come, and a little respect goes far.

DO

Dress modestly in public

Cover shoulders and knees, especially women and away from the malls and hotels.

DO NOT

Drink or seek alcohol

It is illegal everywhere, for everyone. Do not ask, carry or joke about it at customs.

DO

Accept the coffee and dates

Gahwa and dates are the welcome. Taking them, with the right hand, is simple good manners.

DO NOT

Show affection in public

Hand-holding is the limit for couples; anything more can cause real trouble.

DO

Ask before photographing people

Never photograph women or families without consent, and avoid government or military sites.

DO NOT

Eat with the left hand

Eat and pass food with the right hand; the left is considered unclean at the table.

DO

Remove shoes in homes

And at a majlis or mosque. Follow your host at the door.

DO NOT

Rush the Friday morning

Much closes for prayers until early afternoon; plan a slow start and the souq or malls after.

A little Arabic goes a long way, but English is widely spoken across the city, so you will rarely be stuck.

Hospitality is genuine here. If a shopkeeper offers coffee, sitting for five minutes is the polite and rewarding move.

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MORE ON THE SITE

Customs and hospitality in the culture page and what to wear in clothes.

Language and emergencies

a handful of words · the number to keep

Arabic is the official language, but English is very widely spoken in Kuwait City, in shops, hotels, restaurants and among the large expatriate workforce. You will rarely need Arabic to get by, but a few words are always warmly received.

THE TEN WORDS THAT HELP

ENGLISH	ARABIC	SAY IT
Hello (peace)	As-salamu alaykum	a-sa-laam a-lay-kum
Thank you	Shukran	shuk-ran
Please	Min fadlak	min fad-lak
Yes / No	Naam / La	naam / laa
How much?	Bikam?	bi-kam
Water	Maa	maa
Delicious	Ladheedh	la-theeth
Excuse me	Law samaht	law sa-maht

ALL EMERGENCIES	CURRENCY	PLUG	WEEKEND
112	KWD	Type G	Fri-Sat

07

GO DEEPER

More phrases and notes in the language page.

08

Tools and reference

The live tools this guide was built from, the cut-out cards for your wallet, and the sources behind every number.

IN THIS CHAPTER

Take the live tools with you 38

Print cards: cut, fold, take 39

Sources and methodology 40

A note on the links 42

Take the live tools with you

scan to open · data updates after this PDF was printed

This guide is a snapshot; the tools behind it keep updating. Scan a code or type the short URL. Each one is preloaded with the same Kuwait data this guide was built from.



Trip Budget Calculator

Kuwait: 60 USD/day budget, 280 USD/day comfort.

pack-lightly.com/
tool/budget-calculator/



Country Map

Kuwait City, the coast and the desert, mapped.

pack-lightly.com/
tool/country-map/



Best Time to Travel

Best: November to March; skip the summer heat.

pack-lightly.com/
tool/best-travel-time-worldmap/



What to Eat and Drink

Machboos and the Gulf classics, with prices.

pack-lightly.com/
tool/local-food-and-drinks/

Print cards: cut, fold, take

print at 100% scale · credit-card size, 85 x 54 mm

Print this page on A4 or US Letter at 100 percent (no fit-to-page), cut along the dashed lines, and the two cards live in your wallet for the trip. The form fields are interactive in Acrobat and iOS Preview if you would rather type than write.

ARABIC · ESSENTIALS

Hello (peace)	As-salamu alaykum
Thank you	Shukran
Please	Min fadlak
Yes / No	Naam / La
How much?	Bikam?
Water	Maa
Delicious	Ladheedh
Excuse me	Law samaht

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EMERGENCY · KUWAIT

All emergencies	112
Currency	KWD (dinar)
Plug	Type G, 240V
Weekend	Fri-Sat
Alcohol	banned

My hotel: _____

Address: _____

Insurance #: _____

Left card front, right card back: print double-sided on the short edge and they fold into one.

Lost the guide, kept the card? The QR opens the live Kuwait hub with every page this guide links to, plus updates published after this edition.

pack-lightly.com/kuwait/

Photograph both cards before you cut. A phone copy of the emergency card still works when the wallet is at the hotel.

Save a ride app before you land. It is the easiest way around a city with no metro and assertive traffic.

Sources and methodology

every number traces to a dated source



WRITTEN BY

Wouter van Kemenade

Founder of Pack Lightly. Twenty-plus countries on the ground, data-led travel writing with a performance-marketing background. Every number in this guide is verified against a source listed below; if a price moves more than 15 percent, the next edition flags it.

SOURCES USED IN THIS EDITION

1. Hotel pricing: Booking and Hostelworld snapshot 2026-06, Kuwait City and Salmiya.
2. Currency rates: ECB and open reference rates, 2026-06.
3. Visa policy: Kuwait government e-visa portal and national guidance, retrieved 2026-05-15.
4. Daily-cost model: Pack Lightly country-comparison dataset, captured 2026-06.
5. Travel advisories: FCDO and US State Department, last checked 2026-06.
6. Climate and seasons: best-travel-time dataset and 10-year averages, captured 2026-06.
7. Pack Lightly Kuwait cluster pages, retrieved 2026-07: visa · budget · safety · best travel time · eSIM

Methodology. Pack Lightly's country scores aggregate eleven dimensions into the 0-100 scorecard on page 5, re-scored on a regular cycle. Budget figures come from the country-comparison and budget-calculator datasets, climate verdicts from the best-travel-time dataset, both stamped with their capture date where they appear.

What changed in edition 2026.07: first release of the Kuwait guide on the v2 design standard. Next planned update: January 2027. Not covered in depth here: business travel, and the fine detail of the restaurant scene, which changes too fast to print.

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Image credits

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1. **Al Kout Mall, Fahaheel**. Wikimedia Commons contributor, See file description page.
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12. **Machboos spiced rice**. Wikimedia Commons contributor, See file description page.
13. **Marina Crescent waterfront promenade, Kuwait**. Wikimedia Commons contributor, See file description page.
14. **Seif Palace blue-tiled clock tower, Kuwait**. Wikimedia Commons contributor, See file description page.
15. **Souq Al-Mubarakiya market lane**. Wikimedia Commons contributor, See file description page.
16. **The Avenues Mall grand interior courtyard**. Wikimedia Commons contributor, See file description page.
17. **Traditional wooden dhow boats**. Wikimedia Commons contributor, See file description page.

Tour data and prices: Viator Partner API, captured July 2026. Author portrait and brand marks: Pack Lightly.

A note on the links in this guide

disclosure · why this guide is free

This guide is free because some of the booking links inside it are affiliate links. When a reader books a stay, a flight, or an eSIM through one of those links, the merchant pays Pack Lightly. The reader pays the same price either way.

The pick comes before the partner. A hotel area or a platform is chosen for the trip it makes, and where a partner link exists for it that link is used; where none does, the plain link still points there. An overrated sight is still called overrated, and a cheaper option that beats the famous one keeps the slot. The commission funds the guide, it does not choose for it.

Questions, corrections, or a place you tested that belongs in the next edition: write to hello@pack-lightly.com.

Partners linked in this edition: **Aviasales · Booking.com · Saily · Hostelworld · Stay22 · via Travelpayouts**

Links can outlive a print run. If one stops working, the live version of every page in this guide sits under pack-lightly.com/kuwait.

This file is versioned; the edition is on the cover. The next planned update lands January 2027 and replaces this file at the same download.