

# Dress code

## ***At work***

At work, nurses wear uniform. Your uniform is provided by the hospital but you should bring your own shoes. Most nurses wear comfortable athletic shoes, likely similar to what you wear at home.

If you are in a position that does not require uniform, you will wear business dress with a lab coat.

Your clothing should be modest and non-figure hugging.

## ***At home and in your free time***

With the current relaxation of rules in Saudi Arabia there is little need nowadays to wear an Abaya.

However one has to dress modestly.

On the compound and in Western-only areas, you can dress normally.

Most expats find themselves attending parties and balls at the various Embassies, so don't leave your partydress at home. A lot of your social life will be pool parties, so don't forget your swim attire!

You can exercise in women-only gyms and recreational facilities.

If you would like to buy something new you will find that there is a lot of shopping opportunity.

## ***In public***

In public, an Abaya is no longer compulsory. However many of our nurses still wear one and find it very comfortable. If you don't have one before travelling to Saudi Arabia, you can buy one during orientation.

It is not typically required that you cover your hair however, you should have a scarf with you at all times and cover your hair when asked.

Men should wear conservative clothing in public (long sleeves, no shorts). It is wise to have some suits for special occasions and events. Jewellery should also be worn conservatively (i.e. wedding ring and a watch is enough).

## ***What to wear for the climate.***

Saudi Arabia is hot for the most time of the year, so light breathable clothing is advised for your comfort.

However indoor the air conditioning is excellent so you should also pack light sweaters and a jacket.

Winters in the past few years have been rainy and cold, it could be wise to pack for that also.

## ***Can I wear jewellery?***

Oh yes, you'll find that shopping for gold jewellery in the souqs is one of the perks of living in Saudi Arabia

# Money and Banking

## ***How do I open a bank account? Can I transfer money home?***

Opening a bank account in Saudi Arabia is very straightforward.

Once you have your iqama (residence permit), you can go to the bank to open an account. It can take a few weeks to get the iqama.

Your first appointment at the bank can be quite time consuming, but once you have your account set up, you can transfer money easily online or using the an ATM.

## ***Can I use a credit card in Saudi Arabia?***

Saudi Arabia is generally a cash society, but some major department stores and hotel restaurants accept credit cards.

# Housing

## ***Do I need to find my own accommodation?***

No - generally speaking, the hospital provides furnished accommodation including free utilities.

The accommodation is usually within a secure compound.

Normally, this will be located close to the hospital with free transportation to and from work.

It is not unusual for hospitals to provide free transport to the city and/or commercial areas also.

Ask your consultant for more details.

## ***Do I have to share accommodation?***

You will always have your own bedroom and the accommodation is spacious enough to make you feel relaxed. In our experience having a housemate helps our candidates with the settling-in process. Most of our candidates find it works out really well for them.

If you would prefer to live alone there are some hospitals that provide single apartments.

# Annual Leave

## ***How much annual leave am I entitled to?***

Each hospital has a slightly different contract. You could have up to 61 days leave per year, depending on the hospital. Check your contract for more details.

## ***How soon can I take a holiday?***

During the initial 90-day probationary period, you would only be granted leave for emergency purposes.

After you have passed your probationary period, it's just like any other working environment. You need to arrange your leave with the ward manager, as the ward schedule allows.

## ***Can I take my family?***

Generally you can't take your family.

Married status contracts are only awarded to medical consultants and senior nursing staff.

## ***Can my family and friends visit me?***

Yes, it's easy to secure visit visas.

Citizens from 49 Countries and Citizens with a Schengen visa can obtain online a 90 day visit visa.

The hospital will not provide accommodation for your visitors.

## ***Communication with the home front.***

These days communication is just as straight forward as at home. Shortly after arrival organise a sim card and wifi to connect with your loved ones

# Free Time

## ***Can I wander around freely?***

Yes, you are free to go out on your own at any time.

You will typically use taxis to get around. Uber and Kareem are popular alternatives or you can use hospital-arranged transport.

Using a taxi is very cheap and easy. There is no shortage of drivers and most speak some English.

*Since June 2018, women have been permitted to drive in Saudi Arabia.*

## ***What about my social life?***

Friends and family might have the idea that working in Saudi Arabia will put a halt to your social life. The reality is that you can do almost anything you do at home: shopping, eating out, going to the beach, concerts, movies, ....

We advise our candidates to join the Employee Social Club, as this is a great way to get to know people and to find out what is going on.

Due to the long-established expat community in Saudi Arabia, there are plenty of amateur sports clubs. You'll find basketball, cricket, football, sailing, fishing, tennis, golf, horse-riding and much more.

There are also other sporting activities like aerobics, dancing, weightlifting and running.

Other clubs include drama, book clubs and billiards.

The list is endless. Many of our candidates tell us their social lives were busier than ever during their time in Saudi Arabia.

## Things to do in Saudi Arabia

### Shopping

#### *Can I find everything I need in the shops?*

Most things that are available in North America and Europe are available in Saudi Arabia, with the exception of items that are prohibited, such as alcohol, material with explicit content, and pork products.

The main things you need to know are:

- Grocery stores are open at convenient times. They have most of the items that you would expect in stock.
- Pharmacies are easily accessible. A lot of medicines can be purchased over-the-counter.
- The malls are huge you'll have a great time shopping for clothing. Some malls that have male shopassistants may have no fitting rooms. You can either try clothes on at home and return them if necessary. Sometimes you'll find fittingrooms in the restrooms. Jewellery shopping in the gold souqs is very popular among expats and locals.
- Electronics are as easy to find as they are at home.

#### *Can I buy alcohol?*

No. Alcohol and products containing alcohol are strictly prohibited.

#### *Can I smoke?*

Yes you can. smoking is legal in Saudi Arabia and cigarettes are widely available. However, women should not smoke in public.

#### *What is the food like?*

There is a wide variety of food available and much of the food in the supermarket will be familiar to you. Fresh produce is available in the supermarkets but it's more fun to go shopping for your produce in the vegetable souqs (markets).

You should try the authentic Middle Eastern food, it is just as delicious as the exotic names sound; Baba ghanoush and tabouleh, Hummus and Pitabread etc...

See it as an opportunity to expand your tastes. Enjoy the range of choices!

### ***What is the restaurant scene like?***

You will find lots of recognisable names like Pizza Hut, McDonald's, Starbucks and their Arabic equivalents.

Restaurants range from local fast food kiosks selling sandwiches to haute cuisine restaurants for fine dining.

As Saudi has a large expatriate community, you can find almost any national cuisine in Saudi Arabia.

### ***Where can I go at weekends?***

Travel opportunities are one of the main reasons people go to Saudi Arabia in the first place.

Long weekends trips within Saudi Arabia are very popular among our candidates.

Popular destinations include:

- Desert or beach camping as the Red Sea coastline extends over 1800 km
- Diving on the Jeddah coast
- The Nabatean tombs in Madein Salah (500 km north of Jeddah)
- The famous by Lawrence of Arabia railway The Hijaz Railway
- The mountain region Asir to south of Jeddah

The neighbouring countries are only a few hours away by plane so you now have access to many destinations for a weekend trip:

- Dubai
- Egypt
- Abu Dhabi are now within reach

Many of our candidates use their annual leave to travel Africa, Asia, the Far East or go home to Europe.

## **Health**

### ***Can I get prescription medication or should I bring a supply with me?***

Most prescription medications are available in Saudi Arabia. If you have a specific requirement, it is worth asking your recruiter to ask about availability ahead of time.

If you choose to bring medication, keep your prescriptions in the original container from the pharmacy which states your name and the name of the medication.

# Personal Care

## *Can women wear makeup?*

Absolutely The arabic culture has a long tradition that cultivates female beauty.

## *Are there spas in Saudi Arabia?*

Yes, Spa's are cheaper then in Europe and are therefore a popular treat amongst expatriats

# Religion

Religion is an extremely complex topic so our comments should be considered as a brief introduction.

Western media tends to depict Islam as a threatening religion.

You should consider that Islam like any other religion - often provides an sense community, understanding and comfort to many. Islam teaches peace, personal freedom, tolerance and charity - the same basic principles taught by Christianity and Judaism.

However in Saudi is not a sectarian society.

Saudi Arabia is the birthplace of Mohammed and of Islam, and the holy cities of Mecca and Medina are off limits to non-Muslims. Islam is the official and only religion of the country.

Religion plays a large role in every part of daily life.

For example, prayer call is one of the five pillars of Islam. You hear it 5 times per day, and faithful worshipers often head to a mosque or prayer room each time the call is heard.

As a non muslim you should be sensitive about that and understand that if you are in a restaurant or shopping, you will not be served during prayer time.

In Western countries religion is considered a private question, that is not the case in Saudi Arabia, you will be asked about your religion both on applications and during the visa application forms. If you apply for a visa to enter Saudi Arabia, and do not wish to disclose your religion, you will not be issued a visa.

It is very important to understand that taking a job in Saudi Arabia does NOT mean you are expected to become Muslim. Although non-Muslims cannot openly practice their religion, what you do in private (e.g., private prayer) is your own business.

Visas are not granted to individuals who list their religion as "Agnostic" or "Atheist" for the simple reason that most people in Saudi Arabia believe that have no religion is possible.

Additionally, "Jewish" is another complex area. In a demonstration of solidarity with Palestine, Saudi Arabia does not grant visas to people who list their religion as Jewish.

As stated earlier we do not pretend to have all the answers regarding this complex topic. If you are interested in the subject there are good books about it. However we do not hesitate to ask questions during the application process we are there to help you as much as possible.