

Why work in Saudi Arabia?

Saudi Arabia remains one of the world's last great forbidden kingdoms – long closed to outsiders, with a very limited tourism industry. However, health professionals from around the world have been travelling there for years – working in some of the largest, most sophisticated and respected hospitals not just in the Middle East, but in the world.

In general, employment packages for Saudi Arabia will include:

- Tax-free income with few expenses – you can potentially save around 85% of what you earn
- Free flights to and from Saudi Arabia
- Free furnished accommodation and paid utilities
- Generous annual leave entitlements
- Renewable 12 month contracts
- Medical cover and emergency dental care
- Career development opportunities

Living and working in Saudi will be a rich learning experience for a variety of reasons. As well as the challenge of assimilating in to a new way of life/culture, you will be faced with conditions and diseases you would probably not see anywhere else. But with challenge comes reward, and many people return with the feedback that these experiences have been of benefit immensely - not just in their career, but in the way they view the world as a whole. Working in Saudi Arabia, you will have a lot more annual leave than you're used to - many use this extra time off to explore the surrounding Arab Kingdoms, Northern Africa, Asia and Europe. To really get the most out of your time in Saudi Arabia you will need to be open to new ideas, to new people and to different ways of doing things. If you are confident, optimistic and keen to see and experience different things then Saudi Arabia will work well for you.

Today, there are over 400 hospitals in Saudi Arabia compared with just a handful 50 years ago. That equates to around 60,000 hospital beds. Expectation is that this needs to double over the next 5 years in order to cope with escalating demand from a rapidly growing population. With this in mind, opportunities for health professionals are plentiful and overseas trained staff are in demand to help meet this massive need.

Saudi Arabia has built a reputation as a leader in research and hospitals in the kingdom have pioneered many of modern medicine's procedures. You will be rewarded with opportunities to involve yourself in new and exciting developments in health care that you may not have in your home country. Hospitals are well equipped with the latest in advanced and sophisticated equipment. Training, education and career development are encouraged. Health professionals will all find rewarding employment options in Saudi Arabia.

Geneva Healthcare recruits on behalf of several hospitals throughout Saudi Arabia. All our vacancies are hospital based, so you will need at least two years current experience in your chosen field of expertise and this will be in an acute hospital environment. The types of health fields that we recruit for on behalf of our clients include Medical, Nursing, Allied Health and Medical Science Professionals. This includes leadership and management positions.

About Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia, once regarded as a forbidden Kingdom and closed to foreigners is now attracting more skilled health workers than ever. Saudi Arabia is the largest Arab state in the world covering 2,250,000 km².

For many expats new to Saudi Arabia it can be an adjustment and often a steep learning curve due to the cultural differences between Saudi Arabia and the Western world, there are restrictions on how males and females are treated in hospitals and who can treat them.

They also have extremely high rates of comorbidity due mainly to their diet and sedentary lifestyles, which means western health professionals will see things they may never experience in their own country. However once you adjust there are many wonderful experiences Saudi has to offer. Without doubt Saudi does offer the opportunity to save money with its tax free* option and you may find the cost of living has decreased. With accommodation and utilities covered by the hospitals you only additional costs include your own food, phone bill and spending money, leaving more money to save or spend exploring the beautiful country. Saudi's tax free option gives you the opportunity to save money, and in addition to this the decrease in cost of living provides further savings. Your only expenses would be your food, phone and spending money as your accommodation, power and water costs will be covered by the hospital. This will leave you with more money in your pocket to save - or spend on adventures exploring this magnificent.

Saudi has a lot to offer expats from travel and tourism, diversity and food there a lot to do and experience during your free time. Saudi Arabia has several famous tourist destinations which is unbeknown to much of the western world. There is Mecca and Medina, the country's two holy cities, which are on the top of the list for many expats. With a mid year travel trip to London or to the equivalent cost you paid for by the hospital you can really make the most of your 54 days of annual leave.

*Not necessary applicable to everyone Geneva recommends that you check your local tax authority.

Daily Living in Saudi Arabia

Women

The place of women in the Saudi world is one of the concepts that is most difficult for Westerners to understand. Appreciating the religious context is important to understand women's position in Saudi society.

While a Westerner sees that women not able to drive herself or socialise with men outside of their own family, most Saudi women take comfort in their role and in the respect they enjoy from their families - and, increasingly, in the workplace and educational institutions.

With the introduction of universal education, Saudi women now have equal access to education. Recognizing their ability to contribute to the economy and to their own households, women are now taking a more active role in the workplace as healthcare providers, academics and teachers, bankers (in women's banks), journalists, and entrepreneurs in businesses focussed on the female market. According to Saudi Arabia's employment profile by the Saudi American Bank (October 2002), between 4-5% of the Saudi workforce is now made up of Saudi women. Things are changing.

Dress Codes

In August 1979, a dress code for foreigners living in Saudi Arabia was published by the Society for the Encouragement of Virtue and the Elimination of Vice.

Briefly, this publication is designed for the foreign residents of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and is a guide for proper behaviour. The Society's publication stresses proper dress for females, although it also touches upon male attire as well. European clothing is acceptable within the compounds, however tight fitting clothes, dresses or tops with no sleeves are not appropriate. Long loose fitting clothes for females are a compulsory requirement.

The majority of European women wear an Abbaya when outside the compounds. This is a big black cloak, which covers you from head to toe and conforms to the requirements of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Proper attire is important for men as well. Tight trousers and shirts and any type of shorts are discouraged.

Accommodation provided by the hospitals

Free accommodation is normally provided close to the hospitals however each hospital is slightly different. Your Geneva Consultant will be able to give you more specific information dependent on the hospitals you are interested in.

As the majority of the Nursing/Midwifery/Allied Health contracts are single status contracts, the accommodation is shared in two to three bed roomed apartments and come fully furnished and set up with linen, cutlery etc. Medical and Management positions offer single or married accommodation.

Getting Around

All hospitals provide a free bus and taxi service from your compound to your work site to cover all of your shifts. They also organise bus excursions into the city for shopping or other organised excursions.

It is also very easy and cheap to use the local taxi services. Remember, however that women in Saudi Arabia are not allowed to drive a car. They are also not allowed to travel with a man who is not their husband, father or brother unless they are in a taxi!

Electrical Items

TVs are often provided in your accommodation and cable TV is available for a monthly charge. Cable channels include Super Movies, Hollywood Channel, Star World, MTV, CNN, BBC World and others.

DVDs and stereo equipment are available to buy locally, and are generally slightly cheaper than back home. The electrical current is mainly 110V but 220V is sometimes available.

Saudi Arabia

Location Guide

Jeddah

Jeddah is a cosmopolitan city of about three million people and is situated along the coast of the Red Sea in the western region of Saudi Arabia. Jeddah has developed this coastal area and you can now walk along the Corniche where many families meet for picnics and walks late in to the night - watching the lights of the city and the anchored ships further out to sea. There are some lovely restaurants in this area allowing you to sit by the water and watch the sun go down.

Jeddah has retained many of its beautiful old coral buildings within the " Old City" and this area offers a fascinating insight into the historical past of Jeddah - a melting point of pilgrims and traders for centuries.

Riyadh

Riyadh today is one of the fastest growing cities in the world and has made this massive transition since the 1970s and the huge influx of oil revenue. The population currently is around five million people and the building associated with the city continues out in to the surrounding desert.

It is now the country's capital city as well as its financial and administrative centre, as such it has all of the world's Embassy's and head offices of international companies bringing many more expats in to the community.

As described by the Lonely Planet Guide " Riyadh is considered conservative, cautious and sober, yet the Kingdom's capital boasts handsome hotels, fabulous fine-dining and cosy cafés. It's also got considerable culture, including a National Museum that numbers among the best in the region".

Dammam and Al Khobar

These cities are located in the Eastern Provinces of Saudi Arabia and were originally small fishing and pearl gathering villages prior to the discovery of oil in the 1930s and 1940s. Since this time the whole Eastern Region has grown into thriving hub of industry, commerce and science with a rapidly growing population and subsequent building to support this. Due to the oil industry this region has had the longest history of westerners living there.

Culture, Religion and History

Official currency:

Saudi Riyal

Population:

26,939,583 (July 2013 est.) includes 5,576,076 non-nationals. The working population in the Kingdom is a multi-cultural environment as the job opportunities here provide competitive salaries and benefits for all nationalities.

Capital City:

Riyadh

Brief History

The land of Saudi Arabia itself is steeped in history and has been inhabited since prehistoric times. In the second millennium BC trading links with the Egyptians and Babylonians were established for trading in spices and incense, before Roman times the peninsular was the major cross roads of caravan routes between Yemen and Rome, Egypt and Petra, Sinai and Persia.

Saudi has a rich archaeological and architectural heritage dating back tens of thousands of years and many are protected now. Mada'in Saleh is often deemed the most significant and the spectacular rock carved dwellings and tombs, dating from the 1st century AD, are truly awe inspiring and well worth a visit when you are there.

Religion

The official and only religion in Saudi is Islam and this forms the basis of the legal system also.

The religious leaders have strict rules that manage everyday living in Saudi. This includes a prohibition on the sale and consumption of alcohol, a ban on women driving and segregation of the sexes when in a public area. The religious police "mutawa" enforce these rules and are often to be seen where ever the public congregate ensuring that the rules are enforced.

The Hejira Calendar

Saudi Arabia follows the Islamic, or Hejira calendar, which is a lunar calendar, whereas the standard calendar used in the West (the Gregorian calendar), is based on one solar year. The Islamic calendar has 12 months, which are 29 or 30 days long, so the Islamic calendar year is 11 days shorter than the Gregorian calendar year which is 365 days (or 366 each leap year). The weekend is Thursday and Friday, with Friday being the holy day.

Education

Education has become an important factor in supporting the local Saudi population into the workforce for the jobs of the future. Government spending in education is currently double what is spent on healthcare and from 1984 adult literacy rates were at 33% of the population however in 2010 it was 86%.

Economy

Saudi Arabia has an oil-based economy. It possesses about 17% of the world's petroleum reserves, is the largest exporter of petroleum in the world and the petroleum sector accounts for 90% of export earnings making it one of the wealthiest countries in the world. Interestingly, over 5 million foreign workers play an important role in the Saudi economy, mainly in the oil and service sectors.

Geography

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia covers an area of approximately 2,150,000 square kilometres. It is bounded on the north by Iraq and Jordan; on the east by Kuwait, the Arabian Gulf, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates; on the south by the Sultanate of Oman and Yemen; and on the west by the Red Sea.

Saudi Arabia is divided into six provinces. Riyadh is an oases located within the central province of the Kingdom, along with Burayda and the Al Kharj. This area is the most densely populated area of Saudi Arabia. It is ringed on three sides by deserts. City populations: Riyadh (capital) 4.725 million; Jeddah 3.234 million; Mecca 1.484 million; Medina 1.104 million; Ad Dammam 902,000 (2009)

Climate

Saudi Arabia is one of the driest countries in the world, with rainfall averaging less than five inches per year. Distinct seasons in the European or American sense do not exist. Summer is hot with temperatures in some areas reaching 49°C (120°F). Winter is cooler with an average temperature of 23°C (74°F) in Jeddah and 14°C (58°F) in Riyadh. Throughout the country temperatures drop significantly at night. Even daytime temperatures can be rather cool, depending upon the location and the season. Travellers are advised to take warm clothing with them in winter as well as the usual light apparel.

Language

Arabic is the sacred language of Islam, one of the most widely spoken international languages in use today and one of the greatest literary languages in history, with its immense range, power and beauty. Arabic is the official language of Saudi Arabia, but English and other languages are widely spoken and understood in the country.

Law

As Saudi Arabia is an Islamic state, all law is based on the Holy Quran. It is called Sharia Law and governs both criminal and civil cases. The Quran itself is considered the constitution of the country and provides ethical values and guidance. Executive and legislative authority is exercised by the King and the Council of Ministers within the framework of Islamic law. The Kingdoms ministries and all other government agencies are ultimately responsible to the King.

Things to do in Saudi Arabia



Saudi Arabia offers a vast array of tourism activities – fun for everyone!

Saudi Arabia is a fascinating land of contrasts, from the dry desert and its rolling dunes to the deep blue waters and pristine beaches, adventure is offered at every turn. Within a relatively small area there is a wide range of things to see and do.

From the beautiful beaches on the coast, to the magnificent mountains, the desert and the regional oases, camel racing, Bedouin markets and the legendary duty free shopping, there are a whole host of activities available.

Jeddah

Boasts an impressive line-up of sports and recreational activities, with facilities for swimming, football, fishing, horse riding, golf, scuba diving to name but a few. Head to Silver Sands Beach to relax and have a swim, view the amazing 'Kings Fountain' water structure, visit the Fakieh Aquarium, or shop up large at the many malls, markets and souks.

Riyadh

Whether you want to immerse yourself in a bit of history, take a trip to the desert or sample the shopping, Riyadh offers a fantastic tourist experience. Visit the historic Masmak Citadel or the Old Dir-Aiyah ruins, climb the 'Kingdom Centre Tower and enjoy it's vast shopping mall, or go hiking at the enjoy the scenery at Wadi Hanifah

Harrat

This amazing large volcanic area offers fantastic hiking and the opportunity to try a 'cave creeping' experience.

Rub Al Khali

Located on the southern Arabian Peninsula, this is the largest sand dessert in the world - famous for it's exciting 'sand-surfing'