

## Out & About in Riyadh

Riyadh, capital of Saudi Arabia, is a bustling modern city that boasts a population of more than 5 million. It offers most of the amenities found in other major international cities – from five-star rooming and boarding facilities to a dynamic and vast array of shopping opportunities at its world-class malls and centers. Riyadh downtown-equivalent center known as Olaya offers much of such amenities and expected safety.

Here are some useful tips for novice visitors:

As is the case with visiting any major city around the world, common precautions are warranted, for example:

- Exploring the city with a colleague, a friend or a guide who knows how to get around makes the journey far more enjoyable.
- Safety is best in populated areas so avoiding remote areas is always a good idea.
- It's always a good idea to keep a mobile phone handy. For mobile phones without international roaming a local SIM card (and a phone, if desired) may easily and inexpensively be purchased through Saudi Arabia's two major service providers – STC and Mobily (Pronounced mobility). Their outlets are easily accessible at Riyadh's international airport (arrivals level) and throughout the city at shopping malls and centers.

It is worthwhile to be aware of some special conditions that are perhaps unique to Saudi Arabia:

- Women are expected to wear an *abaiya* (a black cover-all robe/dress) when venturing out in public. However, so is not an expectation at the King Faisal Specialist Hospital & Research Centre, where respectable modest clothing may be worn within its premises.
- Headscarves are not expected of non-Muslim women but are recommended. It's a good idea to have one handy in public, either in a handbag or around the neck. When asked in certain areas one can cover her head by draping the scarf overhead. Face cover is not an expectation.
- Men may wear almost any type of clothing. However wearing sleeveless shirts or above the knee shorts are discouraged in public.
- Eating or drinking in public is polite with the right hand.
- Avoiding facing the sole of shoes toward others is an expected social courtesy.
- Overt signs of affection, such as holding hands or kissing a member of the opposite gender are socially deemed improper.
- Some Muslims do not shake hands with members of the opposite gender as a matter of piety and is not meant to be misconstrued as an offensive gesture.

## ✦ **Moving Around the City:**

Some common modes of local transportation within Riyadh are:

- Limousine services such Hala (Phone: 01 4427244 locally or for international calls: +96614427244). The service is available 24/7. A typical fare costs about SAR15-50.
- White Taxis cabs are ubiquitously available throughout the city. Taxi drivers often slow-down and honk to gauge pedestrians interest in a ride. Fares are typically SAR15-40. Women should always travel in a taxi accompanied by another person for safety). Always ask the driver whether he knows the destination and negotiate the fare before getting in the car.
- Most 4- or 5-star hotels provide local transportation services through their own car services. The hotel concierge should be contact about available services and cost.