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## **Saudi Arabia**

### **The Best of Saudi Arabia**

### **7-Day Itinerary**



Majestic Wonders

AL-Ula

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Though people of various cultures have lived on the Arabian Peninsula for more than 5,000 years, the harsh climate historically prevented settlement, except in major oases. Most of the great empires of the ancient world traded with the Arabian Kingdoms that commanded the important spice trade routes on the peninsula. The country's main attraction and its hidden treasure is the UNESCO World Heritage site of Madain Saleh. It is considered second only to the famous site of Petra in Jordan, in terms of Nabatean architectural remains.

There are colourful markets, desert landscapes, coral reefs, rock engravings and ancient monuments; the country has so much to offer to those who choose to venture in it and explore a nation that is seldom exposed to the eyes of the outsider.

#### **Day 1 – Arrive Riyadh**

Arrive at Riyadh International Airport from your home country; you will be met and transferred to your hotel for check-in.

#### **Day 2 – Riyadh – Full Day Touring**

This morning you will visit Diriyah, one of the most important sites from where the history of the Al Saud Dynasty began. It is situated in the eastern part of the Najd area in the valley known as Wadi Hanifa. The Masmak Fort and Dira Souk are two of the most important monuments in terms of historic landmarks in the city of Riyadh. This place was built during the reign of Abdullah bin Rashin in 1895 as a military garrison for his army, which operated under a Governor in Riyadh from Hail. On the 15<sup>th</sup> January 1902, Ibn Saud captured the fort and started the unification of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Lunch will be taken at a local restaurant and then we continue on to the National Museum, a place of learning and discovery, meant to kindle pride in the Arab heritage and reverence for Islam. This national landmark is composed of eight galleries depicting the complete story of Arabian history from the creation of the universe to our modern era. The Murabba Palace is among the most important palaces built by King Abdulaziz in 1937. It was built to accommodate his family; the palace is composed of a number of residential palaces, service buildings and King Abdulaziz Diwan. That same year the King and his family moved into this palace. The palace was built in the local traditional Najid style using local building materials only.

Return to your hotel for dinner and overnight.

### **Day 3 – Riyadh – Al-'Ula**

This morning transfer to the airport to fly to Al-'Ula, either by direct flight or via Madinah or Tabuk. Upon arrival, visit the Mud Village and then drive to your hotel or tented camp for dinner and overnight.

### **Day 4 – Full day excursions to Al-'Ula and Madain Saleh**

Today's full day excursion includes visits to the archaeological site of Madain Saleh, the Hejaz Railway Station, the Nabatean Well, Qasr Al Bint, Diwan and the Al Farid Palace. Wadi Al-'Ula is the gateway to Madain Saleh and is known for its Lion of the Lihyanites – predecessors of the Nabataeans (100 to 500 BC). Madain Saleh was known as 'Al Hijr,' in ancient times and served as a stopover on a very prosperous trade route. The cities lie over 9 square kilometres in an area of isolation about 845 km from Jeddah in the north-western part of the kingdom between Tabouk and Madinah. Dinner and overnight in your hotel.

### **Day 5 – Al-'Ula – Jeddah**

This morning visit Khurabia Elephant Rock, then take a flight to Jeddah either non-stop, or direct via Madinah. Upon arrival, transfer to your hotel for dinner and overnight.

### **Day 6 – Jeddah – Full day excursion**

A morning visit to some of the old Ottoman houses mostly constructed from coral and reinforced with wood so that the beams criss-cross the interior walls. The most beautiful and well known is Nassif House, which was built during the 1850's by the well-known Nassif Family; one of the most influential trading families in the history of Jeddah.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, the house was one of the most important buildings in Jeddah. It was here that King Abdul Aziz spent his first night in Jeddah as the guest of Mohammed Nassif, after he led his victorious army into the capital of the Western Province.

Continue with a visit to Al Tayebat International City for Sciences and Knowledge; this is a beautiful museum housing enormous collections of arts, ethnography and archaeology artefacts.

## **Day 7 – Jeddah**

More visits in Jeddah today including the Open Air Museum and the Kingdom Tower. Continue on to Makkah Road, where the 'Muslims only' sign hangs over the highway. Back to your hotel for refreshment & dinner.

Transfer from your hotel to the airport for your onward destination.

End of services.

### **Note:**

*Saudi Arabia is a dry country; alcohol is absolutely forbidden (as are narcotics and pornographic materials). Dress is modest and women do not need to cover their heads but must wear long gowns, called abayas at all times (these will be provided by your local hosts in Saudi Arabia). Please be advised that upon arrival in the country, the immigration process includes having fingerprints taken, along with a retinal scan.*

*Also be aware that everything in the kingdom closes down between noon and 3pm each day as well as for prayers. During such occasions, you will return to your hotel for free time. In addition, occasionally sites may be closed for unforeseen reasons. Local authorities can also deny visits to certain places without prior notice. We are not responsible for any such events.*