

# Kuwait - OVERVIEW

Updated: February 27, 2014



**Country Name Long Form:** State of Kuwait

**Government Type:** Constitutional Emirate

**Languages Spoken:** Arabic, English, Persian, Malayalam, Tamil, Hinku, Urdu, Bengali, Filipino

**National Flag**



**Kuwait is a Tier III Country. Significant security measures are necessary.**

	Overall Assessment	Political Violence	Crime	Terrorism	Travel Safety
Kuwait					
Key: (L) Low – (M) Medium – (H) High – (C)Critical					

## POLITICAL CONDITIONS

**Political Violence is rated at LOW in Kuwait**

Protests and demonstrations are periodically reported in the country. These can be motivated by a variety of issues, including demands for political reform and concerns over government corruption, as well as in response to regional developments. The country also has a high number of long-term residents who are not accorded equal rights and privileges with Kuwait citizens. Agitation by these groups for greater rights occurs periodically. The threat of violence at protests and demonstrations is low; however, the threat increases if unauthorized gatherings are held. If protesters gather illegally there is a high probability that the security forces will use non-lethal methods to disperse the crowds. Foreign national are unlikely to be directly targeted during civil unrest in Kuwait. Protest can occur at any time, Monday evenings have emerged as a particularly popular protest period in Kuwait.

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Kuwait law permits freedom of assembly as long as organizers of public gatherings of more than 20 persons obtain advance approval from the Ministry of Interior. Several anti-government demonstrations and marches took place in 2013 related to political and social issues. Kuwaitis organized both unlicensed and licensed demonstrations and marches to protest a new electoral law. The MOI exercised restraint during unlicensed demonstrations and marches and, when necessary, used non-lethal measures to disperse protestors who were disrupting residential neighborhoods and traffic.

Controlled and generally peaceful demonstrations also took place in front of the US Embassy.

### TERRORISM

#### **Terrorism is assessed as MEDIUM**

There have been no lethal attacks on U.S. personnel since 2002, and the U.S. Department of State assesses the terrorism threat in Kuwait to be Medium. The U.S. Embassy continues to receive threat information indicating that official and private U.S. citizens may be targeted for terrorist attacks. Soft targets such as shopping malls, hotels, and restaurants can be considered vulnerable to terrorist attacks, although many are making improvements to their perimeters and internal security.

### RULE OF LAW / CORRUPTION

The Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) for 2012 gave Kuwait a score of 43, indicating that the country has moderate levels of corruption. The CPI rates countries by the perceived levels of corruption in the public sector, with the least corrupt receiving a maximum score of 100.

### CRIME

#### **Crime is assessed as LOW**

Criminal activity in Kuwait has decreased overall with recent years. However, an unusual and high-profile violent crime occurred in September 2013 in a shopping mall frequented by Westerners where one local male was fatally stabbed after an altercation. Three local males were charged with this crime. This was the second such incident; the first occurred in an upscale shopping mall in December 2012.

The most commonly reported crimes are opportunistic in nature and commonsense precautions, such as not leaving valuable items unattended, particularly in public places or vehicles, are advised. Reports of petty thefts in the popular

There is a visible security presence in Kuwait and police response is generally very good. Visitors should be aware that there have been incidents of criminals posing as police officers. If approached by any law enforcement officer, you are advised to seek the officer's identification card or details.

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Although several districts within Kuwait City are known to have high incidences of crime, only a few areas are of sufficient concern that official Embassy personnel are asked to exercise particular caution when visiting.

## KIDNAPPING

Kidnapping in Kuwait is rated as low. When kidnappings occur in Kuwait, they are primarily criminal in nature and often involve members of the expatriate labor force. Kidnappings are rare in the country and are unlikely to pose a serious security threat to travelers, particularly Westerners. Kidnappers rarely target foreign travelers in Kuwait, and of greater threat to visitors is petty crime.

Travel to rural areas and poorer parts of Kuwait should be avoided as a precaution. Kidnappings of foreigners in Kuwait could potentially occur outside of Kuwait City where the presence of security force is not as robust.

## SEXUAL ASSAULT

There have been reported and anecdotal incidents of harassment and sexual assault of TCN/expatriate women. Rape is perceived to be fully enforced. Women traveling alone have been harassed while driving and when in public, even at upscale shopping malls in Kuwait.

## NATURAL DISASTERS

Kuwait experiences particularly high temperatures (averaging approximately 104 degrees Fahrenheit) between June and September; precautions should be taken against heat stroke and exhaustion. Sandstorms are also regularly reported and can lead to severe travel disruptions.

## STANDING TRAVEL ADVICE

- Respect religious and social traditions to avoid offending local sensitivities.
- Islamic practices and beliefs are closely adhered to in the country's customs, laws and regulations.
- If approached by any law enforcement officer, you are advised to seek the officer's identification card or details.
- It is illegal for non-Kuwait citizens to participate in any demonstration, even if the demonstration is licensed.
- Maintain a low profile, practice personal security measures.
- Men must wear pants and shirts in public. Unlike in some other countries in the region, it is uncommon for Western women to cover their head in Kuwait. Dresses and skirts are permitted, provided they cover the shoulders and knees, but shorts and short skirts are considered inappropriate.
- Stay in groups, travel in a caravan consisting of two or more vehicles, and stay on the main roads.
- Ensure that someone not traveling with you is aware of your itinerary.
- Avoid hotels that do not have adequate security.
- It is preferable to stay in the main tourist destinations.
- Pay close attention to your surroundings, especially when walking or driving in Kuwait

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- Official taxis are a suitable means of travel in daylight hours in urban areas. It is highly recommended that taxis be arranged through your hotel, or program office. Negotiate the price in advance.
- Women should be especially careful when traveling alone and avoid staying out late without a trusted male escort.
- Make sensible security precautions to mitigate the risk of petty crime, particularly pick pocketing and bag snatching.
- Carry a photocopy of your passport when traveling to avoid losing it in a robbery.
- Do not resist if you are being robbed and avoid eye contact and do not make any sudden movements. Victims have been killed when they resisted attack or refused to give up their money or other valuables.
- Be aware of your surroundings at all times and keep a low profile.
- Never leave your belongings unattended.
- Carry bags close to your body and make sure the fasteners are secure.
- Avoid carrying large amounts of cash or wearing expensive jewelry or valuables.
- Leave all important documents in a safe or safe deposit box at your hotel and only carry certified copies.
- Trust your instincts. If someone or something makes you uneasy, avoid the situation.

### **Important Contact Details:**

**International Dialing Code:** +965

**International Dialing Prefix:** 00

### **Victims of crime in Kuwait should contact the following phone numbers for assistance:**

**POLICE:** The local equivalent to the "911" emergency line in Kuwait is 112

**FIRE DEPARTMENT:** 112

**Note:** Police, ambulance or fire department response may be unreliable in some parts of the country.

## TRAVEL & ROAD SAFETY

- Travel to rural areas and poorer parts of Kuwait should be avoided.
- The standard of infrastructure in Kuwait is generally very high.
- The supply of basic amenities, such as power and water are adequate.
- Driving standards can be poor and erratic, especially outside urban areas.
- **Always** drive with the doors locked and windows rolled up at all times.

## RECOMMENDED TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS

- No entering into any police vehicle that is not clearly marked.

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- No rural travel after dark.
- No deviation from approved travel routes.
- No use of ATMs after dark.
- No photos of or near government and oil industry infrastructure.
- No eating, drinking, smoking or chewing gum in public in the day of Ramadan.
- No bathing or swimming in rivers.
- No traveling to desert areas and certain beaches due to unexploded ordnance and war materials left over from the 1990 – 1991 war.

### HEALTH

Medical facilities in Kuwait are generally of high standard in both public and private medical facilities. Public clinics are widespread and offer basic medical services, and there are also several major hospitals that offer a higher standard of care. Most patients will need to register prior to treatment and will need their Civil ID or passport to access health care. English is widely spoken at both private and public facilities.

- Travelers should avoid food from street vendors, and drink only bottled or boiled water.
- Tap water in Kuwait is generally not safe to drink; this applies to water used for brushing teeth, making ice or washing foods.
- Unpasteurized milk should be boiled before consumption, or powdered or tinned milk should be used as an alternative.
- Fruit and vegetables should only be consumed if they have been peeled or cooked.
- Undercooked meat and fish should not be consumed.

The following vaccinations are recommended or required if travelling to Kuwait:

- Hepatitis A (recommended)
- Hepatitis B (recommended)
- Rabies (recommended)
- Typhoid (recommended)

It is also important to ensure that routine vaccinations are up to date for diseases including influenza, chickenpox (or varicella), polio, measles, mumps, rubella, diphtheria, pertussis and tetanus.

#### **Significant Diseases –**

- Brucellosis – An infection that affects domestic and wild animals and is spread to humans through consumption of unpasteurized milk. The disease can occur throughout the country.
- Tick-borne relapsing fever – A bacterial disease transmitted by ticks that causes recurring episodes of fever. Rural areas are the worst affected.
- Diarrhea – A bacteria, virus or parasite that infects travelers in the country. One of the most common causes is a bacterium known as E. coli, which is transmitted by ingesting contaminated food and liquids.

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- Hepatitis E – A liver inflammation caused by infection that is transmitted through contaminated food and water. The problem exists across the country.

## **HOSPITALS – Kuwait**

### **Al-Salam Hospital**

Ash Shareef Ar Radi Street  
Al Dasma, Kuwait 35151  
Tel: +965 222 32000

### **Dar Al-Shifa Hospital**

Ash Shareef Ar Radi Street  
Al Dasma, Kuwait 35151  
Tel: +965 180 2555

### **Hadi Clinic**

Hawalli, Street 101 P.O. Box: 44630  
Kuwait City, Kuwait 32061  
Tel: +965 82 8282

## **US EMBASSY – CONSULATE LOCATIONS**

### **The US Embassy in Kuwait**

P.O. Box 77  
Safat 13001  
Kuwait City  
Phone: (965) 2 259-1001  
Fax: (965) 2 538-0282  
Internet website: <http://kuwait.usembassy.gov/>  
Email: kuwaitacs@state.gov

**Emergency after hours telephone:** (965) 2 259-1438

## **USF INTERNATIONAL HOTLINE**

USF 24/7 EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE LINE: 813-317-5815

AXA Assistance 24/7 EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE LINE: 1-877-577-9504 / +1-203-399-5130 (Call collect from abroad)

ASSIST ID #: GLMN 04983932. <http://www.culturalinsurance.com/resources/>

\* Information derived from CIA World Fact Book, US Department of State, OSAC, and Travel Guard. This travel overview summarizes some of the most important concerns; however, it does not negate the need for detailed trip planning.