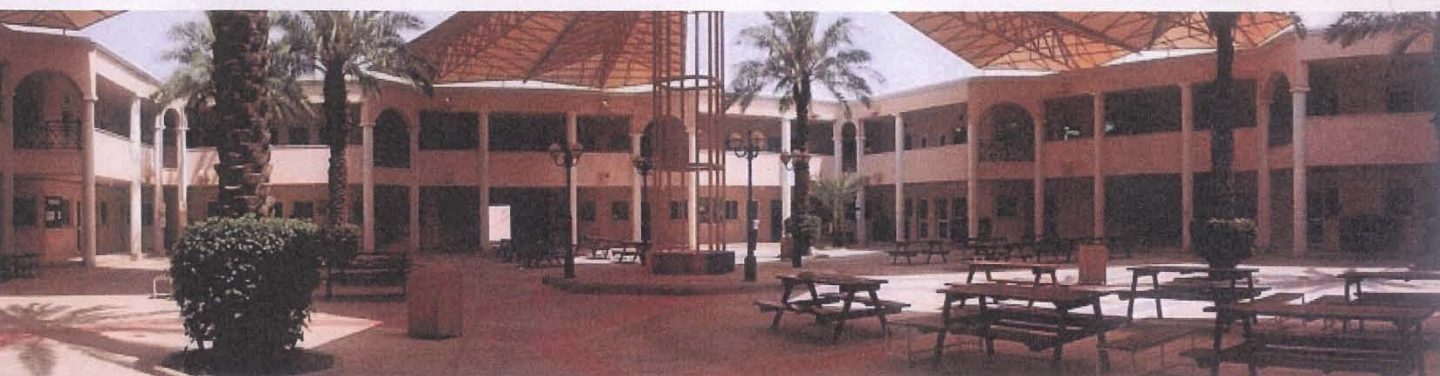
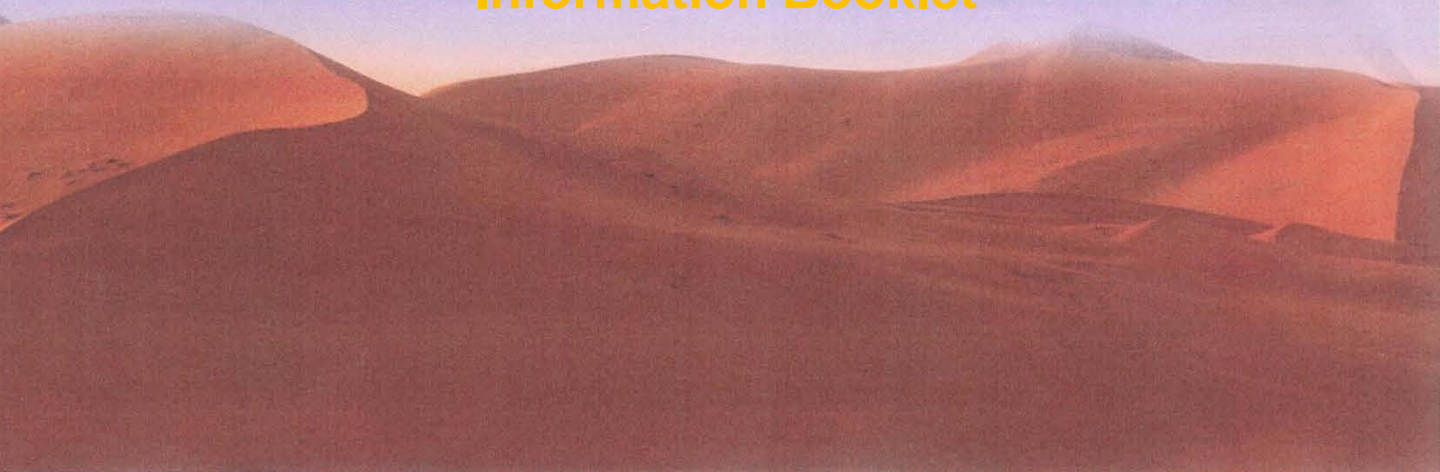




British International School Riyadh

Life in Riyadh Information Booklet



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Welcome

- Thank you for your interest in the British International School Riyadh. Moving to a new country is certainly exciting, but it can also be a daunting experience, particularly when it comes to selecting the right school for your children. At the British International School Riyadh, we have over 25 years experience of providing a high quality education to children. We have deeply embedded strategies for welcoming new families and enabling children to slip quickly and easily into their new classes, make new friends and embark upon a new chapter of their education.
- This Question and Answer booklet is designed to give a brief overview of our school from which you can start to make an informed decision of yours and your child's future. However, a booklet can only go so far towards capturing the ethos and atmosphere of a school. You can also visit our website on www.bisr.com.sa for more information.

The Principal

Aims & values

- **Our students will:**

Develop high levels of self-respect, self-esteem and respect and care of others;

- Become independent thinkers and lifelong learners;
- Develop a love of learning, an understanding of excellence and how it can be achieved both educationally and creatively;
- Set high personal standards for their learning.

- **We shall achieve these aims by:**

- Continually seeking to improve our standards of teaching, learning and citizenship;
- Making learning stimulating, challenging, exciting and enjoyable;
- Using teaching and learning strategies matched to individual learning styles;
- Teaching students how to learn effectively;
- Creating opportunities for students to apply their learning to entirely new situations;
- Presenting achievable but challenging opportunities for success;
- Rewarding positive attitudes, behaviour and success;
- Constructively correcting negative attitudes and behaviour;
- Giving students increasingly responsible roles within the School;
- Encouraging students to help and care for others;
- Teaching students the fundamental importance of positive human relationships;
- Providing opportunities to make a positive contribution to their environment and School;
- Working with parents in close partnership, offering regular consultations, encouraging involvement and support in their children's learning and ensuring accessibility and participation in the life of the School.



Riyadh today

- Saudi Arabia, is a very guarded and reserved in nature, and a land of mystery. At the same time it is a land of wonder and immense variety. Visitors can spend time in the many modern shopping malls of the big cities, all of which offer the latest goods from all the recognized names; or they can experience and explore the stillness and serenity of the Rub al Khali, the largest sand desert in the world. In between these extremes, there is history, Arab culture, volcanoes, souqs, the Red Sea and Persian Gulf and much, much more.
- Before you start your exploring in this beautiful country, you must bear in mind that Saudi is very strict about some things: women, outside the residential compounds, must wear an "abaya", an all-black dress that covers your neck down to your ankles. Shorts are prohibited for both men and women. Muslim prayers are strictly observed 5 times a day and all places close for the thirty minutes of prayer. Shorter shopping excursions have to be carefully planned to fit in with these times – which also vary according to the time of year. Women are not permitted to drive. Compounds have a taxi service for a modest cost, along with a free shopping bus service. The School provides transport for single female teachers.
- Riyadh is one of the fastest growing cities in the world with a population of close to 5 million. There is a large expatriate population which forms a part of this. Making friends and mixing with people of many different nationalities, whether through one of the many clubs or casually in a residential compound is an important aspect of living in Riyadh. Any classroom at the British International School can have up to 12 different nationalities. People in the professional community come from Western Europe, Southern Africa, the Antipodes and the Asian sub-continent mostly. These workers are involved in IT, banking, medicine, education and a host of business activities. They stay between two years and a lifetime.
- Activities in Riyadh are mostly based around shopping, club activities and social gatherings. Shopping malls have significantly grown in number in the last ten years. There are two larger ones in the high towers of Faisaliah and Kingdom but equally large and luxurious ones have appeared all around the city. Clothing, mostly women and children's, features prominently but there are the usual collection of electronics, including computers, sporting goods and houseware. Riyadh, like many other Eastern cities, has all the latest trends. Large stores include Debenhams, Marks and Spencer, Saks 5th Avenue and Next. Many of these malls feature large supermarkets; Carrefour and Hyper Panda are prominent. However, there are several Tamimi supermarkets which are linked to Safeways and perhaps more akin to British taste. However, they do not stock the range you will find in Tesco or Sainsbury.

Riyadh today cont'd

- The souqs offer an alternative to the malls. Batha is part of the old centre of Riyadh. It is a busy, bustling area where most of the Asian community gather. Within Batha, there is a specialty area for electronics known as the 5 buildings; there is the tent souq where you can get any type of canvas product sewn from bag to Bedu tent; the spare parts souq where you can get anything for your car – roof racks, audio equipment, seating covers, alarm systems etc, – all fitted cheaply and quickly; simply leave your car and shop for an hour or two and enjoy a shawarma while you wander; there is a tailoring section where these men can copy any item of clothing you wish, simply following the command 'same, same'. Kuwaiti souq, to the north end of the city is another must to wander and shop for tailoring, furniture, carpets, gold, materials and spices.
- The Saudis crave gold and there are several gold souqs which people regularly visit. Buying gold items is not something the average person does at home, but here it is possibly a monthly excursion, depending on the price of gold; necklaces, bracelets, earrings, rings from simple designs to the most extravagant, jewel-laden collections are abundant in shop windows; nearly all of these items are in 18 to 24 carat gold. Like many other items, they can be bartered for.
- There are many sporting clubs, off-road driving clubs, drama, music and a whole variety of leisure/pastime pursuits including the ever-popular hash. There are two championship, grass golf courses and several smaller courses and, of course desert courses which have to be experienced at least once. Dirab golf course is the most established and is about a 45 minute drive from Riyadh down the spectacular escarpment.

Riyadh today cont'd

- There is a history inside Riyadh, well worth exploring: The beautiful 19th-century Masmak Castle is made of clay and mud brick fort, thick walls and four watchtowers. It played a major part in Saudi Arabia's history. It tells the story in text and pictures of how the modern state came into being when, at the beginning of the 20th century, Abdul Aziz with a small band of followers, captured Riyadh by taking that very fort. He was responsible for unifying the whole of the present Saudi Arabia into the modern state it is today. His sons still rule the country peacefully. Just slightly north of Riyadh is old Diriyah, the old capital which now lies in ruins. It is well worth a wander around. In Batha, to the south, there is the impressive, modern museum featuring many items and artifacts of Saudi and Arabian heritage and culture. In the immediate surround of the city, are to be found many old forts, accessible by short off-road excursions.
- There are many different styles of restaurants ranging from the usual fast food outlets to the more sumptuous restaurants, mostly found in hotels such as the Four Seasons in Kingdom, and Mondos in The Intercontinental. There are many Turkish restaurants offering the 'flat' bbq chicken with hummus, tabula and methabula. There are also many Chinese, Indian, Thai and Italian eating places. More recently, such American chains as Chillies and TGI have appeared. There are even the ubiquitous fish and chip shops.
- Compound life is a significant part of living and working in Riyadh. Many of the compounds are relatively luxurious and include all the facilities you would expect to find in a 5* hotel. There will be swimming pools, tennis and squash, large gymnasiums, restaurant, coffee shop, shops and many other features. Life in the compounds is leisurely as people enjoy the freedom from house and garden chores. To some, the routine of pool, chatting, gym, tennis and shopping can become tedious; to others it is heaven. These compounds have buses to take non-working wives on daily excursions to whatever mall or occasionally for other more interesting visits to museums or farms.

Riyadh today cont'd

- Children wander and play safely but being able to swim is essential. There are many organized sporting and play activities for younger children. Swimming is a popular competitive sport for young children with regular training and meets. There is perhaps less for older children who tend to meet with friends on compounds.
- The true beauty of Saudi Arabia lies outside the cities and only a minority of people take the opportunity to explore one of the world's most undiscovered landscapes. Maybe this is a world for you to discover with your family & friends.

Upon Appointment

- Following the offering of an appointment to the British International School Riyadh, the HR Department will be in constant contact with you throughout your journey out to us here in Riyadh. The HR department will be on hand throughout this very important change to your life and will assist you in ensuring your transition to Saudi Arabia is as efficient and as stress free as possible to ensure your move to us is as smooth as possible.
- Upon acceptance of the appointment, this is where your life will change and become very exiting and where the HR department will advise and work with you from the very outset of acceptance of the job to when you finally arrive safely into Saudi Arabia.
- The HR department will following receipt of your references, process and send you your Letter of Offer along with Conditions of Service which together constitutes your employment to the British International School.
- A welcome pack will be provided by HR and will include:
 - A job description (relevant to the job you have been appointed to)
 - The Expectations of a Teacher (HoD/Tutor/Year Leader)
 - The School's Probationary Policy
 - Next of Kin Form
 - Medical Form
- The HR department will also at this point make contact with our Brokers who will assist and provide you along with the school of what is required in order for the school to secure your visa to come and live and work out in Saudi Arabia.

Passports

- The employee must hold a full passport, valid for at least 6 months from their expected arrival in Saudi Arabia, with at least 6 consecutive blank visa pages.
- Upon arrival to Saudi Arabia you will find that during the course of time you will utilise a high turnover of pages within your passport. At some point whether this is within your first year so, you may require to renew your passport due to running out of pages.
- The HR department will assist you in whether your passport has expired or for renewal. All passports now are renewed by British Embassy in Dusseldorf, Germany and the school will assist in ensuring that this process is done within the timing of when you require your new passport.
- Please be advised that the sole responsibility for your passport is solely yours and that the school holds no liability of loss of passport, or misuse during your employment at the British International School Riyadh.

UK Medicals

- Before being accepted for employment with the School, the employee will be required by the Saudi Embassy in London to provide a UK medical certificate of fitness to work in Saudi Arabia.
- A similar certificate will be required for each agree dependant. If you have children that are of the age of 16 years or under, then they will not be required to undertake the medical.
- The School will advise you of details where best to undertake your UK Medical whether this may be BUPA in London or whether it proves more effective if your local GP can undertake your medical. The HR department will be in contact with you to provide the advise to you regarding each individual case and will ensure that this is done within the allocated cost of the medical that will be reimbursed back to you upon arrival to the school.
- The UK Medical has to be undertaken as this is an compulsory requirement in order for your to obtain your visa for entry to Saudi Arabia.

Travelling out to Riyadh – and with family

- Dependant on your Appointment this can be a Single status Contract or on a Marital status (with or without children) the HR department will advise you of your travel arrangements.
- Prior to your arrival, the HR department will ensure you have your “Welcome Letter” this will include details of your arrival date and flight details. The letter will also detail who your Buddy will be, the school ensures that this is someone who is working within the same department as you. The purpose of the Buddy is solely to assist you during the time prior to your arrival to the school but also upon your arrival. If you have any working questions that you may or may not want to put to your buddy then they can assist you. The buddy will also meet up with you upon your arrival to Saudi Arabia again to provide the support to you if required and to ensure that you have settled into your accommodation.
- **SINGLE STATUS CONTRACT:**
- If you are travelling out as a single status male or female, then your travel arrangements will be made by the school ensuring that your arrival is as close to when the start of the school academic year will start.
- The school will also provide transportation to ensure that you and your baggage arrive safely to your accommodation.
- Please be advised that under Saudi Law that unmarried mixed gender cannot travel together.
- **MARRIED STATUS CONTRACT:**
- As above but dependant on numbers of new staff and the split of male/female employees then transportation will be organised accordingly to the gender.
- Please be advised that marital couples are permitted to travel together in a vehicle.



Arrival to Riyadh Airport

- An Entry Card is usually distributed during the flight and it is advisable to fill this out in the comfort of the aircraft – you need to fill out one card for each passport in your family. Most of the information asked for is printed in your passport but you do need to know the name and address of your Sponsor, which will be the School so have this noted down somewhere.
- Queues at immigration can be very long indeed depending on arrivals from around the world. Families (and couples) travelling together will normally be invited to form a separate line to the right of the immigration hall – perhaps this in one time when children should be seen and heard!
- A hot tip is to queue at the right of the hall anyway as the diplomatic and GCC queues there soon evaporate and the immigration “roustabouts” will shorten the remaining queues using these immigration desks. The designations on the individual immigration desks (First Class, Businessmen, First Visitors etc) are not generally adhered to.
- The School Saudi Liaison Officer will be present at the immigration lounge to ensure your smooth transition through. The Principal and or one of the Senior Leadership Team members will also be present to welcome you on your arrival.
- Porters will wait at the baggage carousels where a minimum charge is SR 10 but if you don't want a porter you should say so. Trolleys are free and usually plentiful.
- The next step is the customs check. Once a certainty, the complete search of every cubic inch of each piece of baggage has now been replaced by an X-ray machine and a cursory inspection. However, the importation of alcohol, pornography, religious materials and pork products remains strictly prohibited and complete searches are made arbitrarily from time-to-time.
- Ladies magazines often contain imagery which is not in keeping with local standards. However, after ten years wide availability of unrestricted imagery such as satellite TV in the Kingdom, attitudes have mellowed somewhat. These magazines may still be confiscated at the discretion of the customs officer but are very unlikely to constitute “an offence”. Computer and music CDs/DVDs may also be retained until such time as their contents can be verified – again at the discretion of the officer concerned.

Accommodation /Household contents

- For the duration of the Contract, the School will provide the employee with furnished accommodation in line with the housing policy.
- The school has a number of villas/apartments in the following compounds:
 - Al Hamra
 - Eid
 - DQ
- Each compound supplies an inventory of quality furniture which may vary dependant on which Compound you are placed on, but the school can assure you that all accommodation provided by the school is to the highest standard.
- The School will also provide you with a one-off household equipment pack on arrival and these items will remain with your property.

Utility Bills for Accommodation

- There will be no charge to the employee for reasonable consumption of electricity and piped-water. Within the accommodation there is a land line phone which if used then you will receive a monthly bill from the compound direct for payment.
- The employee is responsible for maintaining the accommodation in good condition, and may be asked to pay for any damage for damage repair outside normal wear and tear.
- Upon Contractual departure from the School, the employee is accountable for any charges such as the outstanding telephone bills etc and this will be deducted from your returnable deposit.

Medical Insurance/Coverage

- The School provides a comprehensive Medical Insurance Policy which upon commencement of your contract will automatically cover you worldwide with the exception of:
 - Singapore
 - USA
 - Canada
 - Switzerland
 - Hong Kong
- The Conditions of Service will also provide detailed information of the Insurance package the School provides and upon arrival to the School, you will be issued with full details of the medical cover and will be required to read and sign a document to that effect.

Saudi Medicals

- A Saudi Arabian medical which is a statutory requirement, will be carried out on arrival.
- The School will assist you by providing the appropriate documentation such as the Hospital Letter, copy of the employee's passport, passport size photographs and the cost of the medical.
- The school will also organise for passport photo's to be taken which will be arranged with you within the first few days of your arrival to ensure that your Saudi Medical can be undertaken at the earliest opportunity.
- For the Saudi Medical, it is also statutory requirement for a stool and urine sample to be provided. The school will provide the relevant containers and will assist you with any questions you may have.

Iqama Card

- **What is Iqama?**
- Upon receipt of your Saudi Medical, the School will assist you with the processing of obtaining your Iqama Card. Your Iqama card is your Resident Permit which allows you to live and work in Saudi Arabia.
- **Why do you need a Iqama in Saudi Arabia?**
- When you enter Saudi Arabia, as per governmental policy, you must surrender your passport to your sponsor. The School does not adhere to this and the onus is on the individual to securely look after your own passports.
- The school will organise for you to obtain your Iqama with the Saudi Government and this can take up to 2 weeks for the issuing of your Iqama. Your Iqama card includes the following information, i.e your name, Iqama number, Iqama issue place, Iqama expiry, profession, country name, sponsor name, religion.

Visas

- The School will obtain and fund visas relating to (a) the employee and their agreed dependants arrival, (b) all business travel, (c) out and return on renewal of contract and (d) exit only on final departure.
- All other visas, including six-monthly multiple exit/re-entry or a single visa for recreational use are funded by the employee. The HR department will assist you in ensuring that your visa is within the expiry and will provide you with reminders at the holiday periods whether a renewal visa is required.
- Single visas have a one time usage and you can depart and return to Saudi Arabia once and then the visa will expire. The cost of a single visa is SR 200 which is equivalent to £33 (against the assumed exchange rate of 6 SR to the pound).
- Multi exit/re-entry visa have a 6 month gregorian timeline which when you equates this to the hijri Islamic calendar, this works out to around just over 5 months expiry. The cost of a multi visa is SR 500 which is equivalent to £83 (against the assumed exchange rate of 6 SR to the pound).

Opening a bank account/ Currency

- Upon receipt of your Iqama Card, the HR department will assist you in opening up your SABB Bank Account. The SABB Bank is currently affiliated with the school and this must be done at the earliest opportunity in order for the School to pay your salary on a monthly basis.
- The School will assist the employee on the opening of there bank account and will organise for the SABB Bank to come into the school to start the process of paperwork in order the account to be opened and activated.
- It should be noted that SABB is the Saudi Branch of HSBC which is one of the largest and strongest banks in the world.
- You will be provided by SABB a bank card etc as per the UK and cash machines are not scarce but the opposite they are practically everywhere and you can withdraw cash from other banks even though you have a SABB card.
- With a SABB account transferring money back to the UK is very simple and can be done within minutes online with the transfer taking no more than 24 hours but care must be taken due to the difference in working weeks between the UK and Saudi Arabia i.e. Saturday and Sunday the banks are closed in the UK and on Thursday and Friday they are closed in Saudi Arabia thus a limited window for transferring funds to the UK.

Driving Licence

- Only males are permitted to drive in Saudi Arabia and thus the British School encourages males employees to purchase their own cars given their non-entitlement to transport for social purposes.
- The school will assist in the obtaining of your driving licence once you have undertaken your driving test in Riyadh and once you have your Iqama Card.

Obtaining a SIM Card and Internet access

- The Middle east is one of the largest Smartphone users in the world and Riyadh is no exception, where every you look people are on Smartphone's and thus the mobile phone network is one of the most advanced in the world and is currently rolling out a 4G network.
- What you will need is a Sim card which can be obtained from one of the main mobile operators (Mobily, Saudi telcom (STC) or Zain).
- You will simply need you Iqama card or passport to obtain one which can be post paid or prepaid. The Staff are very helpful and the mobile phone operators shops are everywhere.
- The internet can be obtained through various ways but is expensive compared to the UK with an Unlimited download package cost around £50 to £60 per month. This again can be provide via a dongle and tends to be via the mobile phone network and can be poor on performance during pray times to to network capacity.
- Several compound are currently being rollout fibre direct to the villa provided by STC which can provide 20Mb connections at again around £50 per month but the speed and performance will rival what can currently be provided in the UK. This is currently in its early stages with only a handful of compounds activated but over the next 12-18 months the majority of compounds will have this service.
- With regards to the internet it should be noted all traffic is monitored and scanned by the Saudi Authorities and various websites etc cannot be accessed some of which are for obvious reasons but other as a westerner we find bizarre why it is blocked.
- This can be overcome by paying for and using a British based Virtual private network (VPN) and this will then allow you to used BBC I player which is very popular with British expats.

Family and Visit Visas

- Under Saudi regulations, only immediate family members may visit the employee in Riyadh. The visiting family member remains the responsibility of the employee and the School will make the necessary visa applications on the employee's behalf.
- To be noted that visit visas are granted at the discretion of the Saudi authorities and not the School and therefore cannot be guaranteed.
- The employee must bear the cost of these visas together with the variable and actual administration costs incurred by the Saudi authorities and the relevant Broker that you may or may not decide to use.
- The employee is advised not to pay for any flight for their visiting family member until the visa has been issued or confirmed.
- The employee, not the School, bear responsibility for the conduct and well-being of the visiting family member they host and that the employee is therefore strongly advised to ensure that their visiting family member arranges relevant insurance cover, especially medical insurance to which they bear all costs.

Food Prices and Shopping

- Food prices are overall equivalent to the UK with certain foods having large subsidies by the government ie Rice which is a staple food for the Third Country nationals.
- A lot of UK brand foods are available in the numerous supermarkets but they come at a price which can be several times the cost in the UK.
- Food and beverage products, available in the Riyadh supermarkets are of the highest quality and variety. Strict standards are imposed by the Saudi Authorities.
- There are many supermarkets within Riyadh and you can drive no more than a few Km's and there will be another supermarket they are everywhere and many of the larger compounds also have small shops/supermarkets.
- Examples of the Supermarkets in Riyadh are as follows :-
 - Tamimi
 - Hyperpanda
 - Carrefour.
 - Lulu
 - Al- Othaim
 - Euromarche

Eating Out

- Riyadh is a vibrant City that's does not disappoint when it comes to the variety of food and eating experiences to be had. What ever tickles your taste buds there is a restaurant , takeaway or local kitchen than can serve it up. From a simple Shawarma to a chateaubriand, a humble chicken tikka to a chinese banquet it is all in Riyadh.
- From a staff survey the following where highly recommended :-
 - Thai Villa (best Thai food in Riyadh – cheap and cheerful).
 - Coffee Shop and seasons at the Four Seasons (Great Friday brunch with food from all 4 corners of the globe).
 - Chilli's .
 - Turkish restaurants.
 - Indian restaurants.
 - The Globe restaurant.
 - Piato Italian restaurant
 - Trader Vics.
 - Friday brunch at any of the major hotels Sheraton, Hilton etc)
- It should be noted that due to the culture of the Muslim world there are different area's within the restaurants and eating halls that are , Family or men only sections and the women will still need to wear the Abaya.
- With regards to costs this can range from several Riyals up to several hundred Riyals per head depending on the dinning scale ie low end being at an eating hall and top end being the Globe or the Four Seasons.

Shopping Malls

- Riyadh is the Capital of Saudi Arabia and there is no shortage of shops and shopping malls which are growing at an exponential rate with a new mall being constructed every few months and the Capital must have 20+ shopping malls which are to put bluntly huge and can take several hours to browse around.
- The shopping malls are becoming increasingly popular as shopping, food, and entertainment venues as it essentially provides a complete one stop visit to satisfy all needs under one roof.
- Trading hours cater for around the clock shopping from around 9am to 11pm, which makes the malls a first choice venue for your everyday shopping needs.
- When planning your shopping trip beware of the pray times as all shops closed for them which is normally around 20-30mins per pray.
- You will find that the shopping Malls come to life in the dark hours as this is the time the locals tend to shop, morning and day time shopping tend to be quiet and a lot of westerners tend to shop during the day light hours but shopping in the evening should not be avoided but embraced as the whole place is vibrating with activity and people.
- One thing shoppers will notice in Riyadh is the lack of changing rooms to try on clothes but certain malls like Kingdom Mall have a floor dedicated for women only and where women can try on clothes etc and remove the abaya if they so wish.
- Some malls are patrolled by the Religious Police who will when in the presence of a police officer request a lady covers her hair. Thus it is advisable to carry a scarf. It is actually very rare for a western woman to be approached and told to cover her hair, if you are comply when he is in the presence of a police officer.
- Riyadh is slowly changing and I will stress again this is a rare event.

Shopping Malls

- Some examples of the more popular Malls are as follows :-
 - Granada Mall
 - Kingdom Mall
 - Hyatt Mall
 - Al- Faisaliah Mall
 - Riyadh Galleries
 - Sahara Mall

Time Zone

- Riyadh is 2 Hours ahead of the UK during British summer time and 3 hours ahead the rest of the year.
 - Thus from October to March Riyadh is 3 Hours ahead of the UK.
 - April to September Riyadh is 2 Hours ahead of the UK.

Climate

- Riyadh is a very hot country but dry thus even though the summer temperature can rise to over 50° C in the summer months, Riyadh can be a very cold in the winter months and you will be surprised that you will have to turn on the heating in the villa as it has been known to get as low as 5-9° which feels very cold after you have been in Riyadh over the summer months.
- 50° C might sound unbearable but all the shops, cars, villa's etc are all air conditioned and due to the extremely low humidity you can sunbath and swim in this temperate. It is not like Dubai which is very humid.
- But due to the low Humidity you are losing water, even though you do not sweat like you would in a high humidity climate thus you can dehydrate very quickly and the first signs of this are headaches.
- A simple rule to follow is drink often and if you get a headache drink even more water as you are starting to get dehydrated.
- Riyadh due to its dryness is a dusty and sandy place which can irritate eyes and chest.