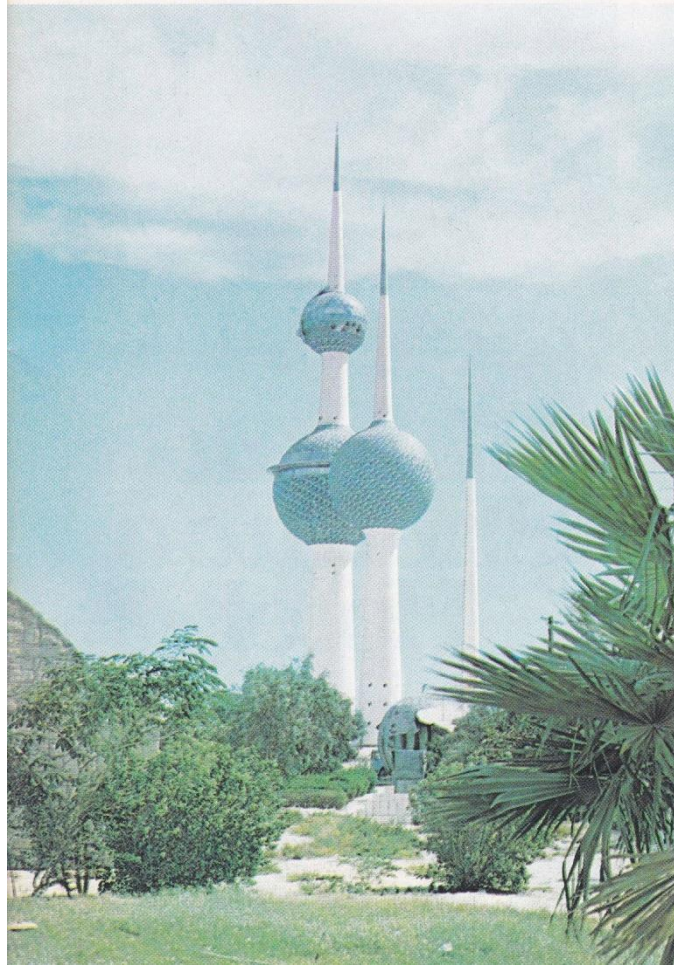




SAS CITY PORTRAIT

# Kuwait

**SAS** SCANDINAVIAN AIRLINES





شيراتون الكويت

# Kuwait-Sheraton Hotel



For Reservation call Kuwait 42 20 55 OR Telex 2016-2434

Front cover: The new landmark of Kuwait – the trio of Kuwait Towers (page 10).

## Introduction

From your SAS aircraft, Kuwait appears like a mirage . . . a modern block of white buildings emerging out of the desert haze. An oasis on the Arabian Gulf.

With almost no water and only 1 % of the land suitable for cultivation, from the start Kuwait produced a community of hardy desert-dwellers who had to struggle against the elements . . . a searing, hot sun in the summer with no shady trees and swirling sand-storms in the winter.

Survival was a keyword. It was in the mid-18th century when a prolonged draught hit Central Arabia that the Al Sabah family of the Anizah tribe trekked north, with their flocks, in search of a fresh water supply. They found some water at the site of the present Kuwait where a fortress was built.

Recognizing the strategic location of Kuwait at the head of the Gulf, the people looked to the sea for their future . . . they became clever fishermen, skilled builders of wooden dhows and by 1899, when an independent state was formed, they were also traders and pearl divers.

Water continued to be one of the State's biggest headaches and had to be brought overland and by sea into the country. Even when oil exploration started in 1938, the locals were as equally interested in the prospect of finding water as in Black Gold. Brackish underground water reservoirs were found at a much later date but at one time five ships per day were operating a shuttle service carrying water bought from Iraq to the oil exploration center at Al Ahmadi where 9,000 workers were living.

Oil was certainly found . . . in unbelievable quantities and by 1946 the first commercial shipment was made.

Almost overnight, Kuwait stepped into the modern 20th century with money flowing in at a fantastic rate and development project following development project.

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This is the 2nd edition of Kuwait City Portrait printed in 35,000 copies – with information based on facts available in September 1977. Changes from 1st edition: Shopping chapter revised, new section added about dhow-building at Doha.

Thousands of immigrant workers, too, were attracted by the high wages (today there are 600,000 of them) and this fact also aggravated the water shortages.

But with Kuwait's wealth and unlimited supply of cheap fuel . . . suddenly a solution could be found to the water problems – there was plenty of water in the sea, so Kuwait built a desalination and distillation plant, the likes of which the world had never seen. So complex and so enormous that today the plants produce 50 million gallons of fresh water per day.

Statistically, it is difficult to comprehend that a nation with less than half a million citizens owns 25 % of the world's known oil reserves, is number two exporter of oil and earns a profit of more than 8½ billion U.S. dollars per year.

How to spread the wealth so that everybody benefits?

The Amir, the Ruler and Head of State, His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah and his Government have been responsible for ensuring that Kuwait has one of the finest health services in the world. With modern hospitals, clinics and highly-trained staff. Free to all residents of Kuwait. There has also been a substantial investment of the State's oil earnings in education – not only primary, secondary and university facilities but also in adult education and overseas scholarships for any students wishing to study abroad. Gigantic housing estates have been constructed with nominal rents fixed by the government. All telephone calls within Kuwait are free of charge. The price of gasoline is extraordinarily low – one in four Kuwaitis own a car. Television aerials sprout from the private and government-built houses. The Kuwaitis are a nation of air travellers.

Looking to the future – what will happen when the oil dries up?

That day is far away, but already the Amir and his government are developing the traditional shipbuilding skills of the Kuwaitis, building up a fleet of their own supertankers, constructing additional power stations for the introduction of more light industries. Kuwait is also investing heavily in its young people . . . to produce future generations of bankers, investors, manufacturers, doctors, scientists, geologists, engineers . . . leaders in water distillation technology, oil engineering, the petrochemical industry.

The same indomitable spirit of the Kuwaitis which enabled them to survive in this hot, dry corner of the world before the discovery of oil, is now enabling them to produce drinking water from the sea, grow flowers and vegetables without soil, run their own fishing fleet,

build machinery, trade in the world's markets, and step gracefully, happily, into a world of 21st-century electronic gadgets.

And, perhaps, this is the secret of Kuwait – that despite the sudden wealth bringing an avalanche of modern equipment and motorcars, the Kuwaitis have maintained their traditional ways, not only in the wearing of the dishdasha and white headdress but also in their respect for the individual, their quiet dignity and their natural desert-born hospitality.

## Your arrival

Before you start your journey ensure that you have a visa (holders of Arab and United Kingdom passports exempted) and visitor's permit. It is also necessary to have a smallpox vaccination certificate and, if coming from an infected area, vaccination certificates against cholera and yellow fever.

As these regulations can change, please consult your travel agent or SAS for the latest information.

On arrival at Kuwait International Airport, you will be directed to passport control where one copy of your visitor's permit will be retained by the authorities – the other copy to be handed over at departure.

After passport check, which is usually smooth and efficient, your bags will arrive by conveyor belt in the arrival hall. You are not allowed to import alcoholic drinks – but can take in as many cigarettes as you wish. However, the local price of tobacco products is so low that the only people who bring in tax-free cigarettes are those smoking a "special" brand.

Make sure that the customs officer marks your baggage before you leave the arrival hall.

Outside the terminal building you will find rows of gleaming, huge American cars with drivers in white head-dresses – the ones with red number plates are taxis! The 10-mile (16 km) drive into the city costs K.D.2. There is no airport bus.

## Currency

The monetary unit in Kuwait is the Dinar (K.D.) which is divided into 1,000 fils. In circulation are coins of 1, 5, 10, 20, 50 and 100 fils and notes of ¼, ½, 1, 5 and 10 dinars.

## Hotels

It is absolutely essential to book your room in advance when planning a trip to Kuwait. The major hotels always seem to be fully-booked and you may end up by having to accept accommodation of a lower category than requested.

Remember that a 15 % service charge must always be added to the quoted rates.

### *De luxe*

**Kuwait Sheraton** (D4)  
Fahed Al Salem Street.  
Tel. 42 20 55.

**Kuwait Hilton** (H2)  
Al Khalij Al Arabi Street.  
Tel. 53 00 00.

**Messilah Beach Hotel**  
(off map)  
Messilah Roundabout.  
Tel. 61 34 66.

*First class*

**Bristol** (E3)  
Fahed Al Salem Street.  
Tel. 43 92 81.

**Carlton** (D4)  
Fahed Al Salem Street.  
Tel. 42 31 71.

All de luxe hotels offer rooms with private bath, telephone and air-conditioning.

Electricity: 240 AC, 50 cycles. Adaptors are available whenever needed.

## Restaurants and cuisine

Overseas businessmen usually find the hotel restaurants and cafés are the most convenient dining places – but for the visitor with a little time to explore, Kuwait offers a number of other interesting establishments. Today there are Chinese and Polynesian restaurants . . . as well as the American-style Wimpy bars.

All the restaurants listed here are of high hygienic standard and, unless otherwise stated, serve European and Oriental dishes.

Surprisingly, Kuwait cuisine differs very little from European, though the meat, fish and salads are somewhat spicier. Among the fish caught in the Gulf which you will find delicious is the Hamur, while the local fresh shrimps are also excellent. Arab chefs are dab hands at roasting lamb and it is always a good bet to order this particular dish, served in Kuwait with spiced rice.

**Abu Nawas** (E4)  
Fahed Al Salem Street.  
Tel. 42 86 19.

**Ambassador** (G1)  
Abdullah Al Ahmad Street.  
Tel. 43 56 21.

**Bristol** (E3)  
Fahed Al Salem Street.  
Tel. 43 92 81.

**Caesar's** (D4)  
Abu Bakr Street.  
Tel. 43 11 10.

**Carlton** (D4)  
Fahed Al Salem Street.  
Tel. 42 31 71.

**Golden Beach** (E3)  
Al Khalij Al Arabi Street.  
Tel. 43 95 22.

**Haroun Al Rashid** (E4)  
Fahed Al Salem Street.  
Tel. 43 92 25.

**Golden Beach** (E3)  
Gulf Street.  
Tel. 43 95 21.

**Phoenicia** (E3)  
Fahed Al Salem Street.  
Tel. 42 10 51.

**Sahara Hotel**  
Sour Street.  
Tel. 42 41 21.

**Universal** (F2)  
Darwazet Abdul Razzak.  
Tel. 42 53 61.

**Kuwait Hilton** (H2)  
Al Khalij Al Arabi Street.  
Tel. 53 00 00.

**Indian New Regal** (D4)  
Abu Bakr Street.  
Tel. 41 14 83.

**International** (E3)  
Abdullah Al Salem Street.  
Tel. 43 28 27.

**Jabri Adnan** (D3)  
Fahed Al Salem Street.  
Tel. 43 46 76.

**Kuwait Grand Hotel** (E3)  
Abdullah Al Salem Street.  
Tel. 43 31 38.

**Jabri Mouaffac** (E3)  
Fahed Al Salem Street.  
Tel. 43 55 59.

**Kuwait Sheraton** (D4)  
Fahed Al Salem Street.  
Tel. 42 20 55.

**Khyber** (E3)  
Fahed Al Salem Street.  
Tel. 42 51 11.

**Samiramis** (E3)  
Abdullah Al Salem Street.  
Tel. 43 57 23.

**Sindbad** (E3)  
Fahed Al Salem Street.  
Tel. 43 33 64.

**Universal** (F2)  
Darwazet Abdul Razzak.  
Tel. 42 53 61.

You will soon discover that the Kuwaitis' consumption of coffee and tea differs considerably from the Western visitors'. No matter whom you visit, you will always be offered cupfuls of strong and bitter Arab coffee or glasses of sweet tea. It would not be considered polite to refuse an invitation to coffee or tea (you are usually given a choice). When the glasses and cups are collected, remember to wobble the cup/glass a few times to indicate that you do not wish to have it refilled . . . otherwise your hospitable hosts will assume that you would like to partake once more.

## Tourist sightseeing

There are no organized city sightseeing tours and the best way of looking around is to hire a taxi by the hour – they cost approx. 4 dinars per hour.

**Kuwait National Museum** (E2). Located on the Arabian Gulf Street, near the Seif Palace. One of the few old houses still remaining in the capital city. A one-storey white building with inner courtyards. Though tiny in comparison with the national museums of many countries, it is well worth a visit. In fact, one cannot really begin to understand the phenomenon which is modern Kuwait unless one lingers for a while in this charming museum and traces the history of the Kuwaitis. Starting in the Bronze Age on the island of Failaka, at the entrance to Kuwait Bay, from where Greek remains are also on view, through to the early settlers of Kuwait with their ever-present problem of water shortages . . . from the pure desert life to a thriving community of pearl-fishermen and boat builders. Pearl diving and pearl-measuring equipment is on view as well as superb scale models of wooden dhows. If you walk anti-clockwise around the museum you will end up in the room devoted to pearl-fishing and the discovery of oil . . . and that's where the changes began. The museum underlines the inventiveness, the commercial awareness and the pride of the Kuwaiti – traits which help one to understand how this tiny state was able to be transformed, almost overnight, into a powerful, rich country of businessmen, bankers, diplomats and manufacturers.

Opening hours: Winter – 7.30 a.m. to 1.30 p.m., 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. (Thursdays, Fridays and holidays: 7.30 a.m. to 11.30 a.m., 4 p.m. to 6 p.m.); summer – 7 a.m. to 1 p.m., 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. (Thursdays, Fridays and holidays: 7 a.m. to 11 a.m., 5 p.m. to 7 p.m.).

**Old City Gates.** Little remains of the mud-walled city which was Kuwait only 25 years ago – but you can still see three of the old gates. They are preserved in a green belt ringing the inner town with parks and gardens. The Sheraton Hotel is located near one of the gates.

(cont'd on page 10)





Code numbers in this booklet refer to the above map. Thus (E3) is located where lines drawn from "E" and "3" cross each other.

### Interesting sights

- |                                   |                         |       |                                     |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|-------|-------------------------------------|
| (E2)                              | Kuwait National Museum. | (F3)  | Science and Natural History Museum. |
| (D/E/F4)                          | Old City Gates.         | (H2)  | Kuwait Towers.                      |
| (E2)                              | Sief Palace.            | (F3)  | Hilali Mosque.                      |
| (F3)                              | Hilali Mosque.          | (D10) | Zoo.                                |
| (off map) Mosque of Sheikh Fahed. |                         |       |                                     |

### Useful addresses

 **SAS Ticket Office:**  
Al Anjere Building, 1st floor, Ali Al Salem Street (E3).  
Open hours: 8 a.m. to 12.30 p.m., 4 p.m. to 7 p.m., Fridays 8.30 a.m. to 12 noon.

 **Ministry of Information:**  
Hilali Street (F3), tel. 42 71 41.  
Open hours: 7.30 a.m. to 1.30 p.m., 4 p.m. to 6 p.m.

Distance from city center to airport: 10 miles (16 km).

(cont'd from page 7)

**Sief Palace (E2).** Situated on the Arabian Gulf Street, on the shore of Kuwait Bay, the sand-colored Sief Palace is the administrative palace of His Highness the Amir, and an official residence. The Arabian-style fort is highlighted by an attractive blue and white clock-tower. Other color is added to the scene by the smart red and white uniforms of the palace guard.

**Mosques.** There are some 300 mosques in Kuwait. Old, new and very new. To name but two worth seeing . . . the twin-minaretted Hilali Mosque on Hilali Street and the quite unique Mosque of Sheikh Fahed, situated in Salmiyah, a remarkable example of modern Kuwaiti architecture inspired by classical traditions.

**The Kuwait Towers (H2)** (see front cover). Newest landmark of Kuwait is this trio of strangely-shaped towers. The highest soaring 600 ft. (185 m) contains a restaurant with panoramic view, the next highest which is 530 ft. (163 m) is a water-tower and the third will be used for electricity supply.

**Science and Natural History Museum (F3),** Abdulla Mubarak Street. Not to be confused with the National Museum which is on the seashore road, this establishment has displays devoted to science, natural history, petroleum – plus a planetarium. Open Monday, Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. Fridays 9 a.m. to 12 noon.

## Excursions

**Failaka Island.** Excavated ruins on this island, which is located at the entrance of Kuwait Bay, reveal evidence of a civilization as old as that of Mesopotamia's.

A Danish archaeological expedition in 1958 unearthed relics from the Bronze Age which linked Failaka with Bahrain . . . and the long-lost Sumerian paradise of Dilmun. Glazed pottery of Greek origin, a Greek temple, a steatite seal from the Early Bronze Age (one of the rarest finds) and silver coins have subsequently been discovered by working parties under the charge of the Department of Antiquity. There is a museum with some of the finds.

In addition to its historical remains, Failaka also boasts a pleasant climate and string of lovely beaches. Plans are now in hand by the government to develop Failaka as a tourist resort. It is then expected that fast launches will drastically reduce the present 2 hours' journey by dhow.

Dhows depart regularly for Failaka from a harbor near the Seif Palace.

**Doha.** Speaking of dhows – these boats are still being built by local craftsmen in the centuries-old manner at Doha, 21 miles (35 km), northeast of Kuwait City. The traditional wooden drills, operated by a stringed "cross bow", can be purchased here. At the time of writing, with some shrewd bargaining, it was possible to obtain a drill for K.D.2½.

## Business sightseeing

**Water Distillation Plant (C5).** The largest sea-water distillation plant in the world was built at Shuwaikh and today the

plants have expanded to produce an incredible 50 million gallons of fresh water every day. Obviously, it takes an enormous amount of fuel to keep the plants operating night and day – and this comes in the form of natural gas pumped direct from the Kuwait Oil Company's oilfields.

**Experimental Farm, Rabuja.** With only 1% of Kuwait's total area suitable for agricultural purposes, the State is now experimenting at the Model Farm in growing crops without soil using the hydroponic principle. Already flowers such as carnations gladioli, freesias and irises and Mediterranean-style tomatoes have been cultivated.

As well as the hydroponicum, the farm also has an aeroponics center where suspended seedling roots are fed by a chemical solution.

The unit covers an area of 20,000 square meters and is one of the biggest in the world devoted to "space age" agriculture. Another exciting experiment is the battery farming of chickens, ducks and breeding of Friesian cattle.

**Mina al Ahmadi.** This is the main oil port and center of the industry . . . nearby tank farms feed tankers at the North and South Piers and supertankers at the artificial island, located some 10 miles (16 km) off shore.

Try to visit the Kuwait Oil Company's Display Center which teaches you more about the industry in a few minutes than you could learn from a thousand books – with sophisticated working models demonstrating all aspects of oil production. Well worth your time if you are interested in learning more about the workings of the modern oil industry. . . .

Be sure, too, to see Ahmadi by night when the flares light up the sky – a memorable sight.

**Shuaiba.** Here is the biggest industrial complex in Kuwait consisting of some 10 large enterprises including an oil refinery and the United Fisheries of Kuwait's harbor.

The Kuwait National Petroleum Company has the world's first hydrogen refinery and is now producing 145,000 barrels of petrol per day. The United Fisheries has a fleet of more than 150 vessels with fish and shrimps now being exported.

Cheap supplies of oil and gas have enabled the companies at Shuaiba to produce liquid ammonia, sulphuric acid, fertilisers, cement and heavy industrial boilers. The State has plans for further development to include the construction of a lubricating oil factory, a steel rolling mill, and shipbuilding yard.

**University of Kuwait (E8).** If any one institution epitomizes the breathtaking rate of development of Kuwait it is the University. And it is not the futuristic architecture alone which underlines Kuwait's progressiveness, but the fact that it is unique in having a majority of female students. An almost mind-boggling statistic when one remembers that some of the mothers and all the grandmothers wore the veil. Today there 4,000 students at the university, of which 2,200 are girls who dress just as their Western sisters in jeans, flared trousers, short skirts . . . who study medicine, geology, chemistry . . .

The University consists of five faculties for male students

and five colleges for women. Education for Kuwaitis is entirely free and students desiring to study abroad are granted scholarships which can amount up to four thousand dollars a year (for study in USA for example).

## The health service

Kuwaiti Health Service is reckoned to be one of the best in the world. Medical care is provided free to all residents of Kuwait. There are 11 public hospitals with some 4,000 beds, 42 clinics, 11 health centers for women and children, 12 centers for preventive medicine. Plus a highly qualified staff of doctors, dentists and nurses. The Al-Sabah Hospital and the Al-Amiry Hospital are the most modern in the Middle East.

## Entertainment and night life

There are no night clubs or Western-style cabarets in Kuwait but the Sheraton, Hilton and Messilah Beach hotels as well as the Marzour Pearl and Kuwaitiya Restaurants offer dinner-dances. Ask your hotel porter for details of times, dress, etc.

There are a number of movie houses featuring English-language films (with Arabic sub-titles) including a drive-in open-air cinema near the airport which is one of the most luxurious in the world – at this cinema you can watch a film from your car, with a plugged-in air-conditioning unit pumping in cool air to offset the heat of a Kuwait summer evening.

## Tipping

Taxi drivers do not expect to be tipped but porters at the airport should be given approx. 150 fils per bag. Restaurant bills generally include a service charge of 15 % but one is expected to tip a little extra.

## Shopping and souvenir hunting

### WHERE TO SHOP

The principal shopping area is centered around the Fahad al Salem Street and the main thoroughfare of the suburb of Salmiah – while the souks are to be found just off Safat Square (in fact, at the top of Fahad Al Salem Street). To mention just a few well-known reputable stores: Saeed & Daulat, Jashanmalls Grand Store, Ashrafs & Union Trading.

### WHAT TO BUY

Radios, tape-recorders, cameras and watches can be good buys. A tip – if you aim to purchase such items take a list of prices from home with you. Then you know for certain whether you're saving money or just becoming confused with the exchange rates!

Kaftans, oriental carpets, colorful fabrics . . . are other items worth examining.

The Kuwait souks may not have the same fairy-tale atmosphere as the bazaars of some Arab lands but the array of old

coffee pots, carved wooden chests, weapons, swords, leatherware, still fascinates – even if the odd plastic airline bag and Japanese camera pops up now and again.

Special tip for a woman's gift – the hand-made gold jewelry is reasonably priced.

## Banks

It may be useful to know a few basic facts about Kuwait's banks and financial institutions.

The **Central Bank** is a state bank founded in 1968 with a capital of two million Kuwaiti Dinars.

There are **six commercial banks** which are limited companies owned by private citizens of Kuwait.

The **Credit and Savings Bank** is also a state bank for promoting industrial and agricultural projects as well as financing building operations.

The **Real Estate Bank** is a specialized credit bank and the **Kuwait Industrial Bank** is a consortium of all the above banks with a capital of 10 million Dinars.

The **K.F.A.E.D.** is the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development, the most powerful investment organization in the Arab world with a capital of one thousand million Dinars.

The **Kuwait Foreign Trading, Contracting and Investment Company** has shares in the capital of other banks in the Arab world. The **Kuwait Investment Company** has a capital of eight million Dinars shared between the State and private investors.

## Business hours

Remember that the weekend starts in Kuwait on Thursday afternoon and continues all day Friday. Saturday and Sunday are ordinary working days.

**Government offices:** winter – 7.30 a.m. to 1.30 p.m. Saturday to Wednesday, 7.30 a.m. to 11.30 a.m. Thursday; summer – 7 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday to Wednesday, 7 a.m. to 11 a.m. Thursday. During Ramadan – 8.30/9 a.m. to 12.30/1 p.m. Saturday to Thursday.

**Commercial houses:** winter – 7.30/8 a.m. to 12.30/1 p.m., 3/4 p.m. to 6/6.30 p.m. Saturday to Wednesday, 7.30/8 a.m. to 12.30 p.m. Thursday; summer – 7.30/8 a.m. to 12.30/1 p.m. Saturday to Wednesday, 7.30/8 a.m. to 12.30 p.m. Thursday. During Ramadan – 8/8.30 a.m. to 2/2.30 p.m. Saturday to Thursday.

Winter: November to April, summer: May to October.

## Transportation

Although there are modern and clean buses which criss-cross the city, it is recommended that visitors use taxis – unless they can speak and read Arabic. Taxis are plentiful. They are usually roomy American cars with illuminated roof signs and red number plates. Standard fare within Kuwait city is 500 fils with a ride to the airport costing K.D.2.

Though taxis are available at stands at most major hotels, it is sometimes a lengthy process to order one by telephone. Therefore, businessmen find it most convenient to hire a taxi for the day – which often works out at approximately K.D.1.500 per hour.

Self-drive cars are available for hire but a local driving permit must be obtained from the Police Department (Traffic Section).

### Climate and clothing

Winter months are cool with rain storms between November and March. Summer from May to September tends to be very warm with average temperatures **in the shade** of 100°F (38°C) to 120°F (48°C). Even April and October can be rather hot.

Obviously in this hot, dry climate, tropical clothes are essential – though normal spring and winter clothing is suitable for the period between November and March. Safari suits are popular with the local expatriates. Shorts are not acceptable.

Women should pack cotton or silk dresses for summer days and long evening skirts and dresses for evening wear.

The principal hotels provide good laundry and dry-cleaning facilities.

### Photography

There are no restrictions as such against photographs; but remember that the Kuwaitis are a deeply-religious people and it is not considered acceptable to take pictures of women. One should also be extremely prudent when photographing mosques.

In general, if one concentrates on “things” rather than “people”, there will be no problems.

### Sports

Basketball and football (soccer) are the two favorite pastimes of the Kuwaitis – but for the visitor (except in the winter), swimming is the most important relaxation. The Hilton, Sheraton and Messilah Beach hotels have private swimming pools and there are several beach clubs and marinas along the Bay of Kuwait.

### Public holidays

New Year's Day, January 1; Kuwait National Day, February 25; \*Birthday of the Prophet, March 1; \*Leilat al Mir'raj (Assension of the Prophet), July 16; \*Eid al Fitr, September 13–16; \*Eid al Adha, November 20–23; \*Hijra New Year, December 11.

\* These are movable dates.

*Edited by Mike Simon*

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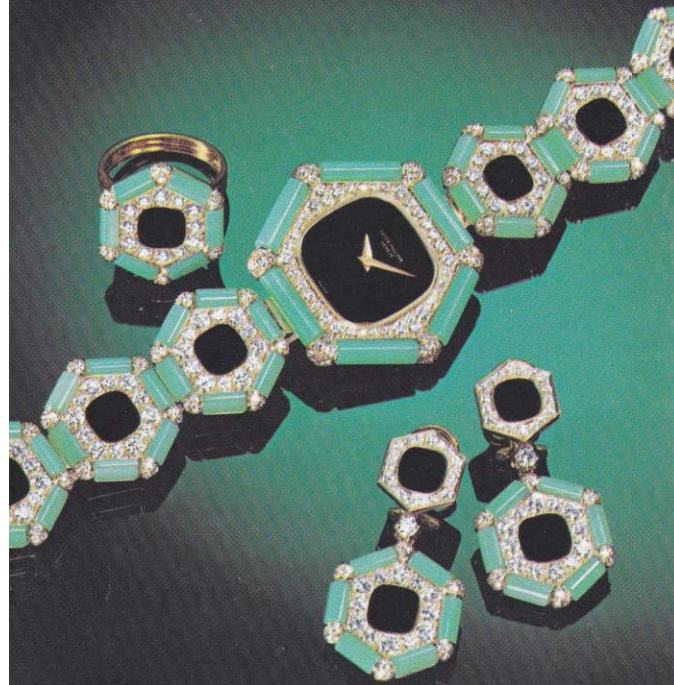
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