

Saudi Arabia

Medical Summary

The health risk information presented here is summarized from Shoreland Travax[®], a decision-support tool used by health care providers to perform a detailed health risk analysis based on specific locations, individual travel styles, and traveler risk behaviors. Travax provides practitioners current, independently researched malaria risk and prevention recommendations in a map-based format that goes beyond the annual WHO and US CDC statements included here. Not included here are current reports from Travax of disease outbreaks or environmental events that may pose elevated risks to travelers' health and safety. The Providers section of this site offers a directory of health care providers who utilize Shoreland Travax for travel health counseling. Learn more about the detailed reports and maps available from these practitioners (includes links to samples).

General Information

Saudi Arabia is a developing nation classified as high income. Located in the Middle East (east of the Red Sea and west of Persian Gulf), the climate is classified as dry (arid).

Vaccinations

Yellow Fever

Although yellow fever does not occur in Saudi Arabia, an official yellow fever vaccination certificate may be required depending on your itinerary.

- *Requirement:* A certificate proving yellow fever vaccination is required for travelers aged ≥ 9 months coming from countries with risk of YF transmission. This also applies to airport transit stops (no exit through immigration checkpoint) longer than 12 hours in risk countries.

Other Vaccines

Depending on your itinerary, your personal risk factors, and the length of your visit, your health care provider may offer you vaccination against COVID-19, hepatitis A, hepatitis B, influenza, measles, mumps, rubella, meningococcal meningitis, rabies, typhoid fever, or a one time polio booster if you haven't previously received one for travel. Routine immunizations, such as those that prevent tetanus/diphtheria or "childhood" diseases, should be reviewed and updated as needed.

Malaria

The following is current information as reported by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the US Centers for Disease Control (CDC):

WHO—*International Travel and Health* (current online update, Country List)

(2019) The country is in the pre-elimination phase of malaria. Local transmission is reported only in villages on the border with Yemen (except in the high-altitude areas of Asir Province) due predominantly to *P. falciparum* and mainly from September through January. The infection rate is reduced to less than 0.3 cases per 100 000 inhabitants. No risk exists in the cities of Mecca and Medina.

- Recommended prevention in risk areas: **C** – Risk of *P. falciparum* malaria, in combination with reported chloroquine and sulfadoxine–pyrimethamine resistance. Mosquito bite prevention plus atovaquone–proguanil or doxycycline or mefloquine chemoprophylaxis (select according to reported side effects and contraindications) ^a

^aAlternatively, for travel to rural areas with low risk of malaria infection, mosquito bite prevention can be combined with stand-by emergency treatment (SBET).

WHO Country List footnote: When available, the date of the most recent update or confirmation is indicated in parentheses in the country list. If no date is indicated, the most recent update or confirmation was provided before 2013.

CDC—*Health Information for International Travel* (current online edition)

Areas with malaria: Asir and Jizan emirates by border with Yemen. None in the cities of Jeddah, Mecca, Medina, Riyadh, and Ta'if.

- Drug resistance³ : Chloroquine.
- Malaria species: *P. falciparum* predominantly.
- Recommended chemoprophylaxis: Atovaquone-proguanil, doxycycline, mefloquine, or tafenoquine.⁴

³ Refers to *P. falciparum* malaria unless otherwise noted.

⁴ Primaquine and tafenoquine can cause hemolytic anemia in people with G6PD deficiency. Patients must be screened for G6PD deficiency before starting primaquine or tafenoquine. See *Tafenoquine Approved for Malaria Prophylaxis and Treatment* for more information.

Other Concerns

Travelers' Diarrhea

Moderate risk exists throughout the country, including in deluxe accommodations. Community sanitation and food safety measures may be inadequate. Some itineraries (e.g., remote destinations, austere accommodations) and activities (e.g., ecotourism, eating street or local-market food) further increase risk.

Travelers should observe food and beverage precautions, which reduce the likelihood of illness.

Travelers should carry loperamide for self-treatment of diarrhea and, if risk is moderate to high, an antibiotic to add if diarrhea is severe. Consult a knowledgeable health care provider regarding which antibiotic is appropriate for you and most effective for your destination.

Other Food-Borne Illnesses

Precautions to prevent brucellosis, seafood poisoning may be needed.

Insect- and Arthropod-Borne Diseases

Chikungunya, dengue, Hajj and Umra travelers, leishmaniasis, Rift Valley fever, West Nile virus may pose a risk. Personal protective measures are important.

Other Disease and Health Risks

Additional concerns include air pollution, Crimean-Congo hemorrhagic fever, leptospirosis, marine hazards, Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS), plague, schistosomiasis, snakebites.

Consular Advice

The material below includes information from the US Department of State (DOS), the UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCO), Global Affairs Canada (GAC), and Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), as well as from additional open-source material. Standard safety precautions that apply to all international travel can be found in the Library article Safety and Security.

Consular Travel Advice

Due to terrorism and missile and drone attacks, US (DOS) and Canada (GAC) advise avoiding travel within 80 km (50 mi) of the border with Yemen; US (DOS) also advises avoiding travel to Abha Regional Airport; Al Qatif (Eastern Province) and its suburbs (including Al-Awamiyah); and the cities of Abha, Jizan, Najran, and Khamis Mushait. UK (FCO) and Australia (DFAT) have more limited warnings.

Terrorism Risk

High risk of attack by domestic and transnational terrorist groups exists throughout the country. Targets may include domestic and international organizations and businesses; public places and events, including those frequented by tourists; and transportation systems.

Risk of kidnapping by terrorist groups exists throughout the country. Targets may include foreigners (especially Westerners).

Crime

Low risk of violent crime exists throughout the country.

Moderate risk of petty crime exists throughout the country, especially in crowded places and at holy sites.

Theft of valuables from unattended vehicles is common.

Civil Unrest

Protests and demonstrations may infrequently occur, especially in Al Qatif (Eastern Province), and have the potential to turn violent without warning. Bystanders are at risk of harm from violence or from the response by authorities. Disruption to transportation, free movement, or the ability to carry out daily activities may occur.

Unsafe Areas

Armed conflict occurs in areas bordering Yemen. Restricted areas exist in northern border areas, including the cities of Al-Batin and Khafji, Eastern Province.

Water Safety

Rent water sports equipment from reputable operators. Scuba dive only with personnel certified by PADI or NAUI, and use equipment only from PADI- or NAUI-certified dive operators.

Outdoor Safety

Desert excursions should only be undertaken with organized groups and experienced guides. Participants should inform someone not on the tour of their itinerary and anticipated return time. An adequate supply of food and water for extended unforeseen delays is essential.

Transportation Safety

Significant risk of traffic-related injury or death exists. The road traffic death rate is more than 24 per 100,000 population, the highest risk category. Carefully assess the safety of transportation options before any road travel.

Speed laws are poorly enforced.

Seat belt laws are poorly enforced.

Structural standards for vehicles may not meet international standards.

Airline Safety

The US Federal Aviation Administration has determined that the civil aviation authority of this country oversees its air carriers in accordance with minimum international safety standards.

Natural Disasters

Sandstorms and dust storms frequently occur.

Seasonal flooding occurs.

Extreme heat (which can lead to heat-related illness) occurs from June through August.

Consular Information

Selected Embassies or Consulates in Saudi Arabia

- United States: [+966] 11-488-3800; sa.usembassy.gov
- Canada: [+966] 11-202-3200; saudiarabia.gc.ca
- United Kingdom: [+966] 11-481-9100; www.gov.uk/world/organisations/british-embassy-riyadh
- Australia: [+966] 11-250-0900; saudiarabia.embassy.gov.au

Saudi Arabia's Embassies or Consulates in Selected Countries

- In the U.S.: saudiembassy.net
- In Canada: embassies.mofa.gov.sa/sites/canada
- In the U.K.: embassies.mofa.gov.sa/sites/uk
- In Australia: embassies.mofa.gov.sa/sites/australia

Visa/HIV Testing

HIV and hepatitis testing are required to obtain a work or residence visa. Travelers, including short-term travelers, may be detained or deported after arrival if found to be positive for HIV or hepatitis.

