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 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 an industrialized nation in the top 25% of the world’s economies. Located between the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf in the Middle East, its climate is harsh, dry desert with great temperature extremes. Desert climate in portions of this country may aggravate respiratory conditions.

Immunizations

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 vaccination certificate is required for travelers 1 year of age and older coming from countries with risk of YF transmission. Note: This applies to airport layovers > 12 hours in these 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 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 U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC):

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

(2016) The country is in the pre-elimination phase of malaria. Local transmission 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 to January. The infection rate is reduced to less than 0.3 cases/100 000 inhabitants. No risk 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: Rare cases in Asir and Jizan emirates by border with Yemen. None in the cities of Jeddah, Mecca, Medina, Riyadh, and Ta’if.
Estimated relative risk of malaria for US travelers: Very low.

Drug resistance\textsuperscript{4}: Chloroquine.

Malaria species: *P. falciparum* predominantly, remainder *P. vivax*.

Recommended chemoprophylaxis: Mosquito avoidance only.

\textsuperscript{4} Refers to *P. falciparum* malaria unless otherwise noted.

Other Concerns

Travelers' Diarrhea

Moderate risk exists throughout the country, including in deluxe accommodations. Food and beverage precautions may 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 may be needed.

Insect- and Arthropod-Borne Diseases

Chikungunya, dengue, leishmaniasis and Rift Valley fever may pose a risk. Personal protective measures are important.

Other Disease and Health Risks

Additional concerns include air pollution, Crimean-Congo hemorrhagic fever, marine hazards, MERS Coronavirus, plague and schistosomiasis.

Consular Advice

The material below includes information from the U.S. Department of State (DOS), U.K. Foreign & Commonwealth 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 military conflict, Australia (DFAT) advises against travel within 30 km (19 mi) of the border with Yemen and against nonessential travel to the rest of the country. U.K. (FCO) and Canada (GAC) advise against travel or nonessential travel to more limited areas. U.S. (DOS) has no current warning.

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.

Risk of petty crime exists throughout the country, especially in crowded places.

Civil Unrest

Travelers should avoid any large gatherings or demonstrations and be alert to regional developments. Any increase in regional tension might affect travel advice.

Unsafe Areas
Caution should be exercised if traveling by sea, including for recreational purposes, in the Persian Gulf, particularly around the islands of Abu Masa and the Tunbs. Iran and the United Arab Emirates each claimed sovereignty over the islands.

Transportation Safety
Significant risk of traffic-related injury or death exists. The road-traffic death rate is > 24 per 100,000 population, the highest risk category. Carefully assess the safety of transportation options before any road travel. Driving at night is not advised. Seek local advice before traveling on roads outside urban areas after dark.

Traffic flows on the right-hand side of the road. Travelers (including drivers and pedestrians) accustomed to traffic moving on the opposite side should be vigilant when navigating traffic.

Airline Safety
U.S. 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
Although Saudi Arabia is one of the driest countries in the world, heavy rains occur from time to time and can result in major flooding. This can severely affect overland travel and reduce the provision of essential services. The shamal, sand-laden winds from the northern deserts, is most frequent in early summer and can blow for days, creating severe driving conditions.

Consular Information
Selected Embassies or Consulates in Saudi Arabia
- United States: [+966] 11-488-3800; riyadh.usembassy.gov
- Canada: [+966] 11-488-2288; saudiarabia.gc.ca
- United Kingdom: [+966] 11-481-9100; ukinsaudiarabia.fco.gov.uk
- 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.: saudiembassy.org.uk
- In Australia: embassies.mofa.gov.sa/sites/australia

Visa/HIV Testing
Visa applicants may need to meet specific requirements. Review the application and contact the appropriate embassy or consulate with questions. According to the U.S. Department of State, foreigners are required to obtain a medical report or physical examination confirming that they are free from contagious diseases (including HIV/AIDS and hepatitis) in order to obtain work and residence permits. Any worker testing positive for HIV/AIDS will not be allowed to work in the Kingdom. Saudi Arabia has not imposed HIV/AIDS travel restrictions on other categories of travelers.

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