



Living in Kuwait

A large variety of choices present themselves to those involved in the daily life of Kuwait whether it is in shopping, exercising, or socializing. People are often surprised at the vast array of products available and places to go. Perhaps the one thing that Westerners find most difficult to adjust is the weekend that is on Friday and Saturday rather than Saturday and Sunday. School begins at 7:15 and ends at 2:00 for students. Many shops close in the afternoon until around 4:00 or 5:00 p.m. Most stores stay open until 9:00 or 10:00 in the evening. Western stores like IKEA and the Sultan Center are open during the afternoons. Traffic can be heavy and congested during peak times in the morning, afternoon and early evening. During the Holy Month of Ramadan, one of the most important religious events in Islam, school begins at 9:00 and ends at 2:00. Stores also open later but do not close until 11:00 pm. Ramadan ends with EID, a time of celebration and family gathering.

ASK Social Committee

The Social Committee is deeply involved in giving people choices through a variety of activities. This includes a Halloween party that begins early with a picnic, followed by trick and treating by the children. After the children are finished, the adults have their own door-to-door trick or treat party, which ends with a final stop for relaxing with friends and colleagues.

During Ramadan, teachers take turns planning a Fitar gathering on Wednesday. Fitar is the meal shared with family members after sundown during this religious month. Christmas caroling by the pool is followed by hot chocolate and Christmas goodies before school ends for the winter break. Also a real highlight for many are the car rally and Music Quiz Night, which have proven to be a raving success.

Shopping

The major source of Western style grocery shopping and products is the Sultan Center, Lulu Hypermarket, and Carrefour. Several of these stores exist throughout the city, but the two major ones are located in at The Avenues and Marina Mall. Here you will find a wide variety of American and Western products. Besides the Sultan Centers Co-op stores are situated in suburban communities for easy access. The Co-ops do not have the variety but they definitely have excellent choices. These shops offer more local items. Most Co-ops are in areas that offer fast food restaurants and a vegetable and fruit market.

The Middle Eastern concept of fruit and vegetable stores, bread shops, and butcher shops are available also. For convenience, every block or two has its own "Baqalla", which is a tiny shop selling a wide variety of goods.

The Old Souk in Kuwait City and the open air Friday market offer traditional items in an old world setting. Carpet shops, which sell carpets from many parts of the MiddleEast are found everywhere,. These carpets vary from the most practical to the highly expensive. People also enjoy visiting the Exhibition grounds in Mishreif where products from the Middle and Far East are sold.

Shopping Malls abound in Kuwait. These malls include shops such as The Body Shop, Debenhams, River Island, Levi, JC Penney's, the Gap, Banana Republic, Laura Ashley, and even Tiffany's just to name a few. True Value, Ace Hardware, Sears, and IKEA and others are also within easy access. There is very little that one cannot buy in Kuwait.



Food

People are sometimes shocked to discover that Kuwait has over 50 McDonald's plus many Burger Kings, KFC, Pizza Hut, Dominoes, Baskin Robbins, Chilli's, Johnny Rockets, Fridays, Fuddruckers as well as local restaurants. A Chinese take-out can be found minutes away no matter where you live. Fish is plentiful and excellent with a local fish market that sells fresh fish every day.

Entertainment

Movies theaters are plentiful in Kuwait. Several malls have multi-screens and the latest in American films are available. An interesting twist is that you purchase a particular seat as one would in a live theater production the States. Movie theater food is quite inexpensive! If you aren't a movie buff, there are other options. Some love to travel in the desert picnicking and camping. Others may be found scuba diving and snorkeling, while others are found pounding the pavement with their running companions and exercising at a club. There are book clubs to be joined, coffee to be drunk at Starbucks or Costas, or a leisure day to be spent sunning by a pool.

Language

Arabic is the official language in Kuwait but an English speaker can always be found. It is not necessary to speak Arabic. It can be fun to learn, however.

Weather

As one would expect the summers are hot and dry. The months of May through October tend to be uncomfortably warm. However, from November through April cooler weather prevails. There will be times when a warm jacket will be necessary. All apartments have heat and can be a welcome relief on cold and windy days in January or February. Rain is infrequent, but bring an umbrella. At least once a year a good thunderstorm can be heard.

Dress

A vast array of clothing is worn in Kuwait. Many Arab men wear the traditional dishdashas and a large number of women wear abayas and the hijab (scarf worn to cover hair), but common Western wear also abounds. It is still considered inappropriate to wear shorts or sleeveless blouses, but, other than that, all type of dress is accepted. It is important to dress respectfully for the culture in which we live.