

# the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

**Travelling to a foreign country can be a nerve-wracking experience, especially when you don't speak the language...**

**This information brochure is intended to help make the trip, and the transition to a new way of living, a little easier for you...**



**THYMIC  
CONNECTIONS**  
RECRUITMENT AGENCY

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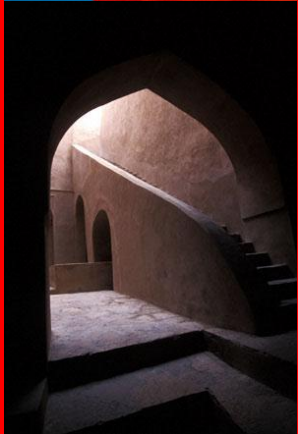
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## *You've accepted the job... so what happens now?*

Once you've made the decision to accept this exciting opportunity, we will begin the process of applying for your visa. We will request all the documentation from you, and we ask that you move as quickly as possible on this to avoid any problems or delays later on.

After we've received the documents, your medicals will be submitted to the hospital for review, and once they've found that you are fit & healthy, they will issue us with a visa authorisation letter for the Embassy. While this process is happening, we will be busy authenticating your medicals, diplomas, contract etc. with the Health Professions Council, the Supreme Court, and finally with Foreign Affairs.

When we receive the visa authorisation & the documents have been authenticated, your passport will be sent to the Saudi Arabian Embassy in Pretoria, where it will be stamped with your 3-month temporary working visa. This visa will grant you access into Saudi Arabia, after which you will be issued with a permanent, one-year working visa. At the same time, an "Iqama" (ID Book) will be issued.

After the Embassy has returned your passport, we will then be able to request your plane ticket from the hospital & will call you to discuss the flight details. We will then return your documents, including your passport, plane ticket, and all the paperwork that you are required to take with you on your journey.

## *What to pack...*

For women, we strongly suggest that you buy yourself an **Abaya** before you leave South Africa – this is a traditional black garment, almost like a robe, which is worn over your clothing when in public. Abaya's can be bought at any of the local Muslim markets in your community. Alternatively, if you are struggling to find one here, you can buy one when you get there – the hospital will arrange for you to go to the local market ("souk") & purchase one as part of the orientation process.



Traditional Abaya

When in public, if you're not wearing an abaya, your clothing should always be conservative & loose fitting!

However, when you're on the housing compound, you can wear anything you wish to wear, so you should pack your jeans, shorts, dresses, and all the clothing you usually wear. Remember to pack cool clothing, as the summers months are very hot & humid, but don't forget to take some warm clothing with too as the winters can get extremely cold at times (it has even been known to snow in Tabuk!!).

The hospital will provide you with a standard uniform, but you will need to take along your own shoes, which can be anything comfortable, but **must be white**, e.g. white takkies & white socks!

Other suggested clothing & personal items to take with you:

- **Formal clothing:** might be needed;
- **Other clothing:**
  - Sandals etc. – take extra;
  - Swimming costume – you will not be able to buy one there;
  - Underwear – take extra, very expensive to buy in Saudi;
  - Jerseys / Jackets – winter evenings can be a little chilly.



Saudi Arabian National Flag



## Your trip...

You will be travelling to Saudi Arabia with Saudi Airlines – all local connecting flights are with SAA (if there are no seats available on Saudi Airlines flights, you may have to travel via the Arab Emirates on either Emirates Airlines or Etihad Airways – this is at the sole discretion of the hospital).

We recommend that you take the following with you as hand-luggage

- **Something to read** to keep you busy while you are waiting between flights;
- **Food & drink** for the wait at the airport (you might not be able to buy anything at the airport – especially in Jeddah);
- **Toiletries** – to freshen up on the plane and at the airport;
- **Travelling clothing**: please ensure that you are dressed conservatively on arrival in Saudi (i.e. long-sleeved, conservative shirt & ankle-length pants).

## Customs / Regulations

It is strictly prohibited to import or bring any of the following into the Kingdom:

- **Controlled substances** (drugs);
- Saudi Arabia forbids all **alcoholic drinks**, anywhere (in many Arab / Muslim states it is allowed to serve wine etc with meals in tourist hotels, but NOT in Saudi Arabia) any attempts to import alcohol are dealt with severely.;
- Bibles, books, newspapers, magazines, jewellery etc. that preach any other **religion** but Islam.

You may take prescription medication with you but you will be required to have the prescription and a letter from your doctor with you.

## On arrival at the Airport...

All flights to Saudi Arabia are routed through Jeddah or Riyadh airports. Jeddah airport is unfortunately a notoriously bad airport. However, if you remain calm & try not to get upset, you shouldn't experience too many difficulties. If your connecting flight out of Jeddah is only for the following day, you will need to spend the night in Jeddah (which is why we recommend you take food etc.).

On arrival in Jeddah or Riyadh Airports, you must pass through Immigration and have your passport and visa entered into the Saudi Arabian computer system. This process may be lengthy depending on the number of people. Airports are considered military sites and they are therefore heavily guarded. This may prove unsettling if you are not prepared.

Men are generally permitted to proceed through Immigration and directly into the baggage claim area. Women may be asked to wait in a small room while airport officials clear your passport through Immigration. You will then be taken to the baggage claim area and expected to clear your luggage through customs.

Your luggage must be cleared through customs at your initial airport of entry. Open each piece of luggage for custom officials. After inspection they will place a small sticker or chalk mark on each piece.

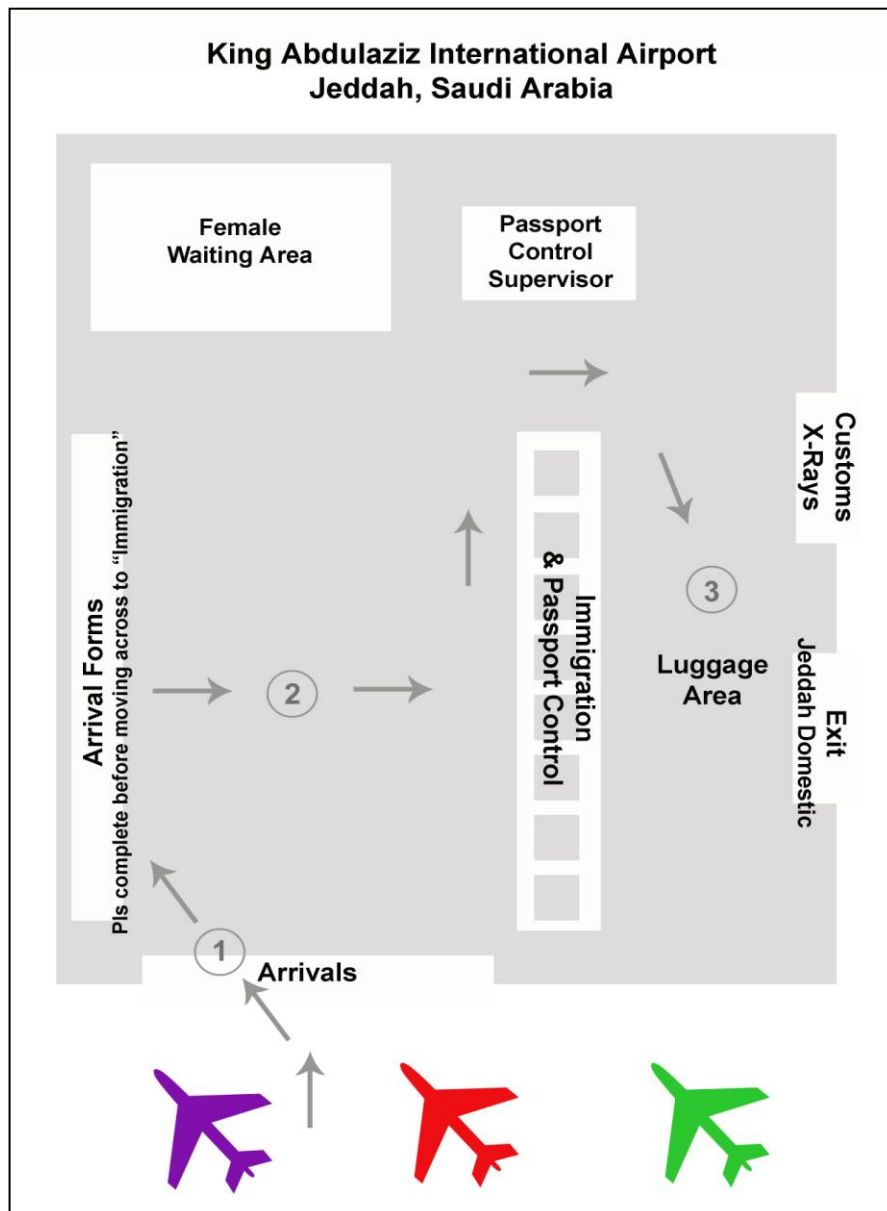
If your connecting flight is the same day, then after customs clearance you may proceed to the domestic area for your continued onward flight. After check-in, women may be asked to go to a separate room until the flight is ready for boarding.



If your connecting flight is the following day, head for the Saudi Airlines desk & request that you be provided with a hotel voucher. This cannot be guaranteed, but it is worth trying – if they do issue you with a voucher, you will be transported to the hotel, & back in the morning. Some hospitals arrange for a 'meet & greet' representative to take you to overnight accommodation, provided by the hospital, but as with the hotel voucher, this cannot be guaranteed. If overnight accommodation is not provided, you will be directed to a small room where you will need to wait.

On arrival at your destination point, you will be met by a hospital "meet and greet" representative and escorted to site.

Women entering Saudi Arabia for the first time will not be allowed to leave the airport until the company/meet and greet representative collects them.



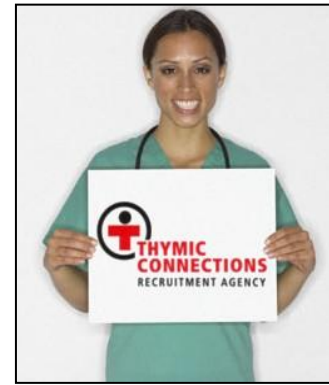
1. If you have not already completed an Arrival Form (usually handed to you on the flight), please proceed to the Arrival Forms Desk & complete one there
2. Proceed to Immigration & Passport Control
3. Proceed to the Luggage Area to collect your bags
4. If your connecting flight is only the following day, you should:
  - a. Proceed to the waiting area, where you will be collected & taken to Domestic Departures for your connecting flight, either later that day or the following morning; or
  - b. Proceed through the exit & wait for the hospital's 'meet & greet' representative to collect you, either to take you to the hospital, or to your accommodation for the night if your connecting flight is only the following day (only certain hospitals will arrange this)

## *At the Hospital...*

### **Identity Document ("Iqama")**

As soon as you arrive on site you will be required to submit your passport to the Government Relations section of the Personnel Department. This will enable your presence in the kingdom to be registered with the local immigration offices.

Within a few days of submitting your passport, you will be supplied with a temporary base pass. This enables you to travel locally and obtain access to the military cantonment.



Your passport will remain in the Personnel Department and will enable your residency permit (**IQAMA**) to be obtained. This will take a few weeks. After the **IQAMA** has been issued, your passport will stay within the Personnel Department.

A short time after your arrival you will be provided with a permanent (12-month) base pass. Please remember that this and your IQAMA are valuable documents. Their loss will result in a fine and serious difficulty with the authorities. Keep each document with you at all times. You will be required to show one and sometimes both on entry to the cantonment and frequently outside the hospitals. Should either be misplaced, report the matter immediately to the Personnel Department. Whenever you leave the Kingdom, both these documents must be left with the Personnel Department. Your passport will be returned to you whenever you go out of Saudi Arabia.

### **Orientation**

New employees are welcomed by the Project Staff members at a general orientation / in-processing meeting.

You receive an introduction to project regulations and procedures and housing / transportation / communications information. You will get a tour of the hospital. Sometimes a brief guided shopping tour at the shopping centres or "Souks" are included.

More detailed orientation sessions are held over the next several days, as appropriate and as the busy hospital schedule allows.



**NURSING STAFF:** A Standard pharmacology examination is given to all nurses who will dispense medications. The examination is usually given shortly after arrival at the hospital (an example was provided to you with the original visa pack). You will also have to do an IV Test & a CPR Test.

### **Security / Restrictions**

Access to the hospital is restricted to employees, members of the armed forces and their agreed dependants.

Employees will be required to sign in and out of the compound and female employees are subjected to a curfew (usually midnight or 1 am at the weekend).

Guests must register at the security gate and will be required to surrender their IQAMA'S or driving licence when they enter. All guests must be signed into the compound by a resident who will be held responsible for the conduct of the guest. All guests must leave the compound before 12/midnight.

### **Salary**

Staff are generally paid directly into a local Saudi bank account, which the hospital will help you set up as part of your orientation process, in Saudi Riyals, monthly in arrears, approximately ten days after the end of the month. Most hospitals will give a salary advance of SR500.00, but this is not encouraged. Please make sure you take sufficient money with you (±SR1,000.00).

There are no restrictions concerning the transfer of monies into or out of Saudi Arabia. Saudi Riyals can be exchanged for the currency or cheque of your choice and then be mailed or telexed to your own bank account. Please make certain you have your bank account details in South Africa with you.

## Life in The Kingdom...

### What every visitor to the kingdom of Saudi Arabia should know before they arrive!

A visit to Saudi Arabia is not like a visit to most countries. It is important that visitors are aware of these differences before they come so that they can prepare themselves. Saudi Arabia is a very safe country to visit in general, and the people are usually kind and helpful to visitors, but breaking certain rules, knowingly or through ignorance can cause great offence. By following the rules, a visitor should have no problems while exploring this country.

- 1) Whilst it is permissible to take photographs in Saudi Arabia, discretion must be used. Employees should be aware that Saudi regulations prohibit taking photographs of military areas, government offices and airports.
- 2) Care should also be taken when photographing Saudi families (in particular Saudi females), or which may be deemed as portraying the Kingdom in an unfavourable light.
- 3) Unmarried couples could face some difficulties. It is forbidden for single people to socialize with members of the opposite sex. This rule is not strictly enforced where non-Muslim visitors are concerned, but it is still an issue in restaurants, hotels and public places. Public displays of affection, even holding hands, are frowned upon.
- 4) Women are not permitted to drive anywhere in the kingdom.



- 5) The usual means of getting around in a city is by "limousine" or taxi. Most drivers come from Pakistan or other countries and speak at least rudimentary English. However, the drivers often do not know the city well and many need directions, so check that the driver knows where he is going. You should always agree a price for your journey before getting into the car. Women should sit in the back.
- 6) All shops close for the five daily prayer times. These closures vary in time between 20 minutes to 45 minutes. Restaurants also close, although if you are already inside, you will usually be allowed to stay.

- 7) Personal identity documents should be carried at all times. Police can inspect them at checkpoints or at any time.
- 8) Pork and pork products are also forbidden in the kingdom. Some over-zealous customs officials have been known to even confiscate pork-derived insulin.
- 9) Be prepared to have your bags thoroughly searched on entry and on leaving the kingdom. Any material deemed "offensive" or "un-Islamic" or "indecent" will be confiscated.
- 10) Public toilets are often hard to find, and frequently well below the standards that visitors are used to. Take advantage of any decent facilities when they are available, and it is a good idea to carry a supply of toilet tissues, as it is often not provided.
- 11) It is forbidden for non-Muslims to visit the holy cities of Makkah (Mecca) and Medina. By-pass roads direct non-Muslims around the cities.



- 12) **Please avoid accepting or applying for loans** from banks etc. within the Kingdom – many candidates in the past have done so, with the result that they were unable to repay the loans & were deported & denied re-entry to the Kingdom.
- 13) Supermarkets, pharmacies etc are modern and well stocked with almost every requirement a foreign visitor may have. Imported goods can be expensive though.

*Please keep in touch & let us know that you've arrived safely...*

