SWITZERLAND GLOBAL ENTERPRISE

Kuwait

Business Travel Guide

Compiled by:

Embassy of Switzerland in Kuwait

Kuwait, October 2024

ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE

Because of its attraction as a labor market, Kuwait has strict visa regulations. A Swiss citizen holding a regular passport (not temporary) needs a visa (tourist or business) to enter. The applicant's passport must have at least six months of validity. Ordinary Swiss passport holders can apply for e-visa prior to their travel to Kuwait through the following web site https://evisa.moi.gov.kw/evisa/home_e.do, a visa can also be received on arrival at Kuwait International Airport. In the case of a business visa, the company inviting the visitor can arrange for the visa to be collected at the airport. Should the company not arrange for the visa, the visitor can collect it at the airport with the invitation letter.

Holders of diplomatic, service and special passports are exempt from visa. (Entry into force of the agreement 21 July 2016)

Detailed info on Visa https://www.kuwaitmission.ch/OVisa.aspx

Air flights are the most common form of traveling in and out of Kuwait. There is only one international airport. SWISS International does not fly to Kuwait. Kuwait Airways is the only carrier that has direct flights to Geneva and these are subject to seasonal changes. The other alternatives mostly used for non-direct flights to and from Switzerland are KLM, Qatar Airways, Lufthansa and Turkish Airlines.

Transfer from the airport to the city center:

- The rate for a taxi from the airport to downtown, and vice versa, is around KD 10 (CHF 33).
- Ride sharing such as Careem is also available.

HEALTH REQUIREMENTS

Mandatory and recommended vaccinations: No recommended vaccine

Mandatory medical insurance: No mandatory medical insurance

Other mandatory health requirements: No mandatory health requirements

Requirement to issues a residency: No vaccines needed for visitors or residents. Foreigners applying for jobs and residence will have to undergo an HIV (Aids) test, as well as other health aptitude tests. Any resident who may be found HIV positive will be deported.

PUBLIC SECURITY / RECOMMENDED PRECAUTIONS

In general, the security in Kuwait is quite good, some attention should be taken for driving in the country. Petty crime is very low. Some protest can take place during political unrest. For more updated information kindly visit: https://www.eda.admin.ch/eda/fr/dfae/representations-et-conseils-pour-les-voyages/koweit/conseils-pour-les-voyages-koweit.html

TIME ZONE

Time difference between Switzerland and Kuwait: +1 in Summer, +2 in Winter

Kuwait City	Central European Time +2

Kuwait does not have day light saving time.

BUSINESS HOURS

	Weekdays	Saturdays	Fridays and Nationals Holidays
Government Offices	08.00 to 02.00**	Closed	Closed
Banks	08.30 to 15.00	Closed	Closed
Shops	08.00 to 21.00	10.00 to 22.00	10.00 to 22.00*

Kindly note that the week starts on Sunday in Kuwait and Friday is off. And that the above times can vary due to the month of Ramadan.

*Depends on the nature of the business. Malls are open some services might be closed.

**When dealing with the government, it is advised not to meet during the first two and the last two hours

PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

Birthday of the Prophet*	15 September 2024
New Year’s Day	1 January 2025
Al Israa wal Miraj (The Prophet's Ascension) *	27 January 2025
National Day	25 February 2025
Liberation Day	26 Febraury 2025

Eid Al Fitr*	31 March – 2 April 2025
Eid Al Adha*	6 – 9 June 2025
Al Hijra (Islamic New Year) *	27 June 2025

*Islamic holidays are subject to confirmation at the time.

Ramadan is the holiest month of the Islamic Calendar. Muslims fast from sunrise to sunset during Ramadan. Most restaurants and cafes are closed during daylight hours, but major hotels will normally keep one restaurant discretely open for non-Muslim guests. During Ramadan, government offices and most businesses have shortened hours, though many shopping malls and restaurants operate well past midnight.

NATIONAL TRADE FAIR CALENDAR

The dates of the main trade fairs can be obtained from: https://kif.net/en

COMMUNICATION: TELEPHONE AND INTERNET

Kuwait's country code is: +965

Local SIM and eSIM card can be bought at: Ooredoo, Zain, and STC stores in the airport and outside the airport.

Important phone numbers:

All Emergencies	112

Kuwait has one of the fastest and most stable GSM and 5G networks.

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

Electricity plug and socket:

The voltage in Kuwait is 220 V with a frequency of 50 Hz.

METHODS OF PAYMENT

National currency in Kuwait is the Kuwaiti Dinar (KWD). Some retail stores and super markets can accept Saudi Rials and other Gulf Currencies. ATM's With USD EUR AED SAR can be found at the airport.

Exchange rate as of July 29, 2024: CHF 1 = KWD 0.35.

When entering or leaving the country with Kuwaiti Dinar (KWD) 3000 or more in cash or other monetary instruments, the money must be declared in writing to the custom office.

Tipping is not necessary but generally customary. The average tipping is around 10 %.

Acceptance of methods of payment:

	everywhere	almost everywhere	limited	not accepted
Cash (national currency)	☒	☐	☐	☐
Cash (GCC currencies)	☐	☐	☒	☐
MasterCard	☐	☒	☐	☐
Visa	☐	☒	☐	☐
American Express	☐	☐	☒	☐
Diner	☐	☐	☒	☐
Apple Pay	☐	☒	☐	☐
Google/Samsung/Garmin Pay	☐	☒	☐	☐

DOMESTIC TRAVEL, LOCAL TRANSPORT

Public transport is limited to a modest fleet of buses, which do not cover all areas and are not known for punctuality. They are not recommended to foreign visitors. Plans are underway to build a railway system in future.

Private cars and taxis are recommended means of transportation for tourists and business travelers. The road system is well developed. The country has one of the world's highest ratios of cars to population at one car for each two persons. A Swiss visitor can either rent a car through the hotel or from car rental offices in the city center or use taxis. A medium sized 4-passenger car can be rented for about KWD 10 per day (CHF 33), while an 5 km trip by taxi can cost KWD 5 (CHF 14). Kindly note that taxis in Kuwait have a predetermined price per journey it is advised to always negotiate. while an average trip by taxi can cost KWD 3 (CHF 10).

Taxi fare for a 15 minutes journey: The average price is CHF 10 for the 15 min. Kindly note that taxis in Kuwait have a predetermined price per journey, it is advised to always negotiate.

Main ride hailing apps: Careem and Kuwait Grand Limo

Main method of payment for taxi and subways: Cash and some accept cards

Car rental with/without a driver can be arranged at numerous companies:

- Hertz (https://www.hertz.ch)
- Kuwait Grand Limo (with Driver) (https://www.q8grandlimo.com)
- Europcar (https://www.europcar.ch)

ACCOMMODATION, TEMPORARY OFFICE SPACE

There are about 20 five-star hotels in Kuwait, some 40 four-star, and 30 three-star hotels, in addition to tens of hotel apartment complexes. The Sheraton and JW Marriott are located in the city center and are generally favored by visiting business people for their proximity to headquarters of local companies, banks, government offices and the Chamber of Commerce. The uniform rate for a single room in a five-star hotel is KWD 85 (CHF 280) plus 15% service charge, and KWD 67 (CHF 220) plus 15% service charge in a four-star hotel.

Hotel apartments can be cheaper and are often preferred by foreign visitors coming for longer stays. Their numbers are also on the rise and the new ones are of good quality.

In Kuwait, there are opportunities for co-working within café settings, and a number of providers offer co-working solutions (https://www.coworker.com/kuwait?view=list).

The concept of temporary office is not widely available in Kuwait. Some coworking spaces are available.

LANGUAGES USED FOR BUSINESS

Arabic is the official language, but English is very widely used as a second language, especially in the business community. Kuwait has many foreign communities, the largest being from India, Egypt, the Philippines and other Asian nations. Swiss business people must make sure they send or bring with them English-language catalogues or any other printed promotion material.

BUSINESS PRACTICES

Tips for initiating business contacts:

Swiss firms wishing to export their products or services to Kuwait need to have patience and perseverance as registration formalities and other paperwork usually take a long time to complete. Regardless of who initiated the contact, the Swiss exporting company needs to present its product elaborately. The dispatch of a pictorial catalogue may not be good enough to trigger the desired reaction. Kuwaitis know that their country is a highly competitive import market and are used to getting many such offers. Since the process from the first contact to decision-making is rather lengthy, a Swiss company will be well advised to follow up on its first contact. Kuwaitis are clever merchants with a lot of exposure to the international markets.

Scheduling Meetings:

Punctuality is important when attending meetings in Kuwait, and it is advisable to arrive on time. However, it is common for meetings to start later than scheduled, as some delays are normal. Successful meetings often extend beyond the expected timeframe, reflecting the importance and depth of the discussions. Patience and flexibility in these situations can contribute to a more productive and positive outcome.

Business Attire:

For business visitors from Switzerland to Kuwait, adhering to a business dress code is highly recommended. Men should wear a suit and tie, and women should wear trousers, dresses (below knee

length), and half or long sleeves. It demonstrates professionalism and respect for the local business culture. It is common to see Kuwaiti counterparts in traditional national dress during these meetings, reflecting their cultural heritage and customs. Dressing appropriately will foster mutual respect and a positive business relationship.

Business attire is the best attire to have while in meetings in Kuwait.

Introducing yourself:

Touching, like a pat on the shoulder, is part of the local culture as sign of endearment. But it must be carefully avoided between men and women. Swiss men will be well advised not to offer to shake hands with a Kuwaiti woman wearing (the Islamic) head cover, unless she initiates the gesture. By the same token, Swiss women would avoid offering a handshake with Kuwaiti men unless the other side offers to.

Building trust and personal relationships:

A foreign visitor is always offered a warm welcome and is expected to reciprocate by avoiding being too formal. Kuwaitis have compounded names where often the last name could be the name of the person's grandfather, not of his family. After the exchange of business cards, it is safely polite for a Swiss visitor to use the title Mr. or Ms. with the first name of the person. Likewise, the Swiss visitor should not be offended if he/she was addressed with his/her first name, especially if his surname is multi-syllabic and difficult to pronounce. Kuwaitis can also quickly go on first-name basis as sign of endearment. Anyone with a PHD Degree, regardless of specialization, is referred to as Doctor.

Offering and accepting gifts and invitations:

In Kuwait, the exchange of gifts is a common practice and is considered a gesture of goodwill. Accepting and giving gifts graciously is an important aspect of building strong business relationships. Additionally, receiving an invitation to the home of a business partner is a significant honor, reflecting a high level of trust and respect. This gesture indicates a deeper level of connection and is an opportunity to further strengthen the business relationship in a more personal setting.

Sensitive topics:

When meeting with Kuwaiti counterparts, Swiss business people should be mindful of certain sensitive subjects to avoid. Topics such as politics, religious practices, and gender issues should be approached with caution or preferably avoided altogether. Discussing these matters can lead to misunderstandings or discomfort, as they are deeply rooted in cultural and personal beliefs. Focusing on common business interests and maintaining a respectful and professional demeanor will contribute to a more positive and productive interaction.

BUSINESS RISKS

Business people face a low risk of fraud in Kuwait if they conduct basic checks and due diligence. However, corruption can be a challenge, although the new government is hopeful in addressing this issue. The Kuwaiti dinar is a very stable currency, providing financial confidence for business transactions. Despite this stability, late payments are a common issue that businesses may encounter in Kuwait. Being aware of these factors and preparing accordingly can help in navigating the business landscape effectively.

https://risk-indexes.com/global-corruption-index

https://www.serv-ch.com/coverpractice/list#

Swiss Export Risk Insurance SERV insures political and *del credere* risks involved in exporting goods and services.

Products for exporters

Product for service providers

Products for financial institutions

The full range of services and products offered by SERV can be obtained at www.serv-ch.com.

Your contact person in Zurich

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& Representation
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Email: verena.utzinger@serv-ch.com

Your contact person in Lausanne

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Tel.: +41 21 613 35 84
Email: dominique.aubert@serv-ch.com

IMPORT OF SAMPLES AND CATALOGUES

The ATA carnet is not available in Kuwait, samples and catalogues must be declared to customs. Useful local websites, addresses, email and telephone numbers

Business news	https://www.arabtimesonline.com/news/category/business/ https://kuwaittimes.com/business/		
Customs hotline	http://www.customs.gov.kw	+965 24955000	info@customs.gov.kw

ADDRESSES OF EMBASSY AND CONSULATES OF SWITZERLAND

Embassy of Switzerland in Kuwait

Qortuba, Block 2, Street 1

Villa 122

Kuwait

kuwait@eda.admin.ch

+965 25 34 01 72

Opening times:

09.00 13.00 Sunday to Thursday

Embassy of Switzerland in Doha

Villa 60
Zone 66
Wadi al Humra Street 807
Doha
Qatar

doha@eda.admin.ch

+974 4020 3400

Opening times:

09.00 11.00 Sunday to Thursday

For consular affairs and visa matters.

ADDRESSES BILATERAL, NATIONAL AND LOCAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI)
Address: Commercial Area # 9, Al-Shuhadaa St., Kuwait City
Phone :+965 1805580 Ext.#555
Fax: +965 22300074
Email: kcci@kcci.org.kw
Website: https://www.kcci.org.kw
German Business Council Kuwait
Address: Tijaria Commercial Tower, Soor, Kuwait City
Phone +965 60077568
Email: info@gbc-kuwait.org
Website: https://gbc-kuwait.org

Swiss Kuwaiti Business Platform (SKBP)
kuwait.business@eda.admin.ch

Chambre Arabo-Suisse du commerce et d l'industrie (CASCI)
Address: Chemin des Mines, 2 ,1202 Geneva, Switzerland
Phone: +41 22 506 42 21
Email: arabswisscham@casci.ch
Website : https://www.casci.ch/

ADDRESSES OF THE EMBASSY AND CONSULATES OF THE STATE OF KUWAIT IN SWITZERLAND

The Kuwaiti Embassy in Bern
Brunnadernrain 19
P.O. Box 458
3000 Bern
Tel: +41 31 356 70 00
Fax: +41 31 356 70 01
Email: info@kuwaitembassy.ch
Website: www.kuwaitembassy.ch

Opening times:
09.00 12.00 & 13.00 16.00 Monday to Friday

The General Consulate of the State of Kuwait
2, avenue de l'Ariana
1202 Geneva
Tel. +41 (22) 918.01.30
Email: consulate@kuwaitmission.ch

Opening times:
09.00 to 12.00 Monday to Friday

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