

Religion and Social Customs

Most Saudis are part of the Wahabi Sect of the Sunni Branch of Islam. The public practice of any other religion is not tolerated. Saudis subscribe to the traditional way of life as portrayed in the Koran, upon which all national legislation is based. Thus, pork products and alcohol are strictly forbidden within the Kingdom.

Although not required to wear veils, Western women are expected to dress conservatively (i.e., slacks or dresses with sleeves and hems below the knees). Wives should not necessarily expect to accompany their husbands to business-related social functions. Women are not allowed to drive cars.

During the period of Ramadan (a month-long period of fasting), westerners should not smoke, drink or eat in public (except in hotels). Foreign visitors should not photograph Saudis without permission; photographing airports, military installations and similar facilities is forbidden.

Personal effects and tobacco products may be brought into the country but the import of alcohol is strictly prohibited. Books, magazines and video tapes are subject to censorship.