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## 1) Introduction

I'd like to welcome you to "Dar Al-Salam; the Peace city" Al-Madinah Al-Munawara.

This hand book is to help you settle in as a resident in Al-Madinah and as an employee in Taibah University. You can use it as a reference, as it provides you with important information and advice on how to get along with the settings and customs of the city. It also informs you of the facilities and services available in Taibah University. You may want to seek your colleagues' advice and expertise for any further information. Note that any information regarding fees, costs, prices or phone numbers are accurate at the date of writing, but may change. Thus, this handbook will be updated from time to time by the English Language Center (ELC). Please ensure that you use the latest version.

We hope you find this handbook useful, pray that you enjoy your time in Al-Madinah and wish you a pleasant and peaceful stay.

## 2) An Introduction to AL-Madinah AL-Munawara

The Holy City of Madinah:

Al-Madinah AL-Munawara is in the western province in The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Madinah, which lies 447 kilometers north of the Holy City of Makkah, is the second holiest city in Islam. It was to Madinah, that the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, and his followers, departed in 622 AD when faced by the hostility and persecution of the Makkhan merchants. The citizens of Madinah asked the Prophet to live amongst them and to arbitrate in their affairs (an invitation taken to mean their rejection of polytheism and submission to the will of the one God, Allah). It was then in Madinah that the Islamic era began. Madinah is then the city of the Prophet. As the place in which the Holy Qur'an was compiled and from which the Prophet's companions administered the affairs of the Muslim community, it was the seat of the first Islamic state. From Madinah, armies, spreading the word of the Prophet, were dispatched to Egypt, Persia and Syria. Madinah is also the place in which the Prophet, peace be upon him, is buried.

### 2.1 In and about in Al-Madinah :

#### a) Culture and Religion

KSA is probably the most Islamicly governed society in the world. Many aspects of daily life are governed according to Islamic beliefs. For example, all public facilities are legally required to close at prayer time - 5 times a day for about 30 min. Prayer times will differ a little from day to day, as seasons change. You can always check the daily prayer times in local newspapers.

Segregation is in place in many public places, as in schools, universities, libraries, restaurants, funfairs and parks (these places are usually divided into either male/female sections or into families/single men sections).

Women cannot drive in Saudi Arabia although some institutes/ work places offer women's buses. Local women cannot travel intercity/internationally without permission from a male relative.

Arabic is the main spoken language and written word, and is the official language used in all government departments. English is the second language in Saudi Arabia. It is taught in

government schools from 6<sup>th</sup> grade and in private schools from KG1. English is widely used in business and can be seen on most road signs and advertisements.

Islam is the official religion of Saudi Arabia, which also forms the basis of the country's legal system, called the Sharia, as set down by Prophet Mohammed 'peace be upon him'.

Saudi Arabia is governed by Sharia, or Islamic law, which means its rules, regulations and laws are based on the Koran and the Sunna, the spoken and acted example of Mohammed. Sharia governs all aspects of public and private, social and economic, religious and political life with the appointed advisory body, the Shura Council.

The official calendar is the Hijri Calendar, (which marks the year Prophet Mohammed 'peace be upon him', migrated from Makkah to Madinah). Based on the lunar year, the Hijra year is shorter than the Gregorian. Business is generally conducted in both calendars, but particular attention should be paid to the movement of the two religious holidays, as they will not be on the same Gregorian dates each year.

There are two official holidays "religious holidays" in Saudi Arabia Eid Al-Fitr and Eid Al-Adha. Eid Al-Fitr celebrates the end of the holy month of Ramadan and is the longer of the two. It starts with a large prayer gathering and then visits to relatives and friends. Presents or some money is usually given to children and close family members. Eid Al-Adha, celebrates the annual pilgrimage to Makkah.

During these two official holidays, Madinah becomes filled with visitors and pilgrims, as celebrating these holidays in AL-Madinah fills one with spiritual peace and joy.

Eid Al-Fitr holiday is after Ramadan's holiday and lasts for 5-6 days. Eid Al-Adha holiday is usually for two weeks.

Summer holiday or summer vacation is usually right after the second term of schools and lasts for about two to three months.

#### **b) Weather**

There are two main seasons in Madinah: winter and summer. The winter lasts for about 3-4 months, and can be surprisingly cold and very dry. You may need jackets or pullovers to keep you warm. You might also need a heater at home, as homes in Madinah are not built with heating systems. In summer, temperatures reach approximately 45C. It is also dry at summer. You need to use sun block lotions to protect your skin and sunglasses for your eyes. It's recommended that you wear light cottoned, colored clothes to keep you cool. You usually need to use the air-conditioner extensively. There are short periods which are neither summer nor winter. However, these spring and autumn like weeks are few.

#### **c) Safety and Security**

Saudi Arabia is generally a safe country. While crime is low by Western standards, a certain background level of nonviolent opportunistic theft does exist. Locking doors and keeping valuables on one's person is called for. Violations of Saudi law can bring a visitor into contact with the local police and justice systems. Corporal and capital punishment are both used against both Saudi and other nationals. Embassies can provide only limited help in these situations.

Foreigners should register their presence with their embassy or consulate. Emergency alert systems using e-mail and cell phone messages are maintained by many governments for their guest workers.

**d) Places to Visit**

- **The Prophet's Holy Mosque**

The Prophet's Mosque, Al-Masjid Al-Nabawai, the second holiest mosque in Islam, is located at the very center of Al-Madinah Al-Munawara. The first thing that any visitor to Madinah does is visit the Prophet's Mosque 'peace and blessings of Allah be upon him'. The first thing you should do, upon visiting the Mosque is to pray two raka'ats of greeting (tahyat) to the mosque. "ZamZam" water is readily provided for the visitors inside through out the corridors of the Mosque. There is also a "ZamZam" filling point on the northwest corner of the plaza, opposite the car park entrance 8. There you can fill large quantities of ZamZam for home use. Opening hours 8:00am- 11:00 am and 4:30pm – 6:00 pm. Note: take your own container.

The Prophet's Mosque 'peace and blessings of Allah be upon him' has become extraordinary equipped, in its unique planning and design, to provide worshippers with convenience, comfort and ease so that they themselves may worship with peace, tranquility, calm and security. They can concentrate on the reason they came to visit the Prophets' Mosque, worshipping Allah, only.

- **Quba' Mosque**

The mosque is 5 kilometers away from the Prophet's holy Mosque. Quba' mosque is the first mosque ever built in Islam. One Hadith ( the Prophet's actions and sayings) says: " Who performs ablution in his/her home comes to Quba' Mosque and prays in it has the reward of Umrah" (Authentic)

- **Al-Qiblatain Mosque**

AL-Qiblatain Mosque is an old mosque, dating from the time of the Prophet Mohammad 'peace and blessings of Allah be upon him'. It was originally built by Bani Salamah, (a sub-tribal group). It is 5 kilometers northwest of the Prophet's mosque.

- **Al-Meeqat Mosque**

This mosque is also known as Thul Hulaifah (the name of the district in which its located). It is the Meeqat, the place of Ihram for those who are going to Makkah to perform Umrah or Hajj, for the people of Madinah and those coming from farther away. It is about 24 kilometers from The Prophet's Mosque 'peace and blessings of Allah be upon him', on the west side of Wadi Al-'Aqeeq (a valley).

- **Mountain 'Uhud**

This mountain is one of a chain of closely connected mountain elevations, which run in an east-west direction. Its length extends for about 8 kilometers and its width is between 2-3 kilometers. It is here that a historic event occurred, in the third year of Hijrah, the Battle of 'Uhud the second battle in the Prophet's era. The stature of Mount 'Uhud is magnified amongst Muslims because of several excellent Prophetic hadith (the Prophet's actions and sayings) among them is the Saying: "Truly this is a mountain that loves us and we love it". (Authentic)

- **Baqi'ah Al-Gharqad**

Baqi'ah Al-Gharqad is the main cemetery of Al-Madinah, and has been since the time of Prophet Mohammad 'peace and blessings of Allah be upon him'. It is located opposite the southeastern section of the Prophet's Mosque, making it the closest place to the Mosque of all the historic places in Al-Madinah. It is in this cemetery " Baqi'ah Al-Gharqad" that the wives of Prophet Mohammad "Mothers of the believers , the Prophet's daughter Fatima Az-Zahra', The Prophet's sons, some of his noble companions and other relatives of the Prophet are buried.

Several Hadiths mention that visiting the Baqi'ah is both virtuous and meritorious. The Prophet 'peace and blessings of Allah be upon him' visited it once at the end of the night and prayed for those who were buried there, Saying: " Peace be upon you, Oh Believers, I grant you my pledge that tomorrow truly we will be lofty and worthy, Allah willing. Oh Lord, forgive the residents of Baqi'ah Al-Gharqad" (Authentic). All Believers should follow the Prophet's example and say the same prayer every time they pass by the Baqi'ah.

▫ **Other Places**

Al-Juma'a Mosque - King Fahad Holy Qura'an Printing Complex

King Fahad Park - Al-Baida'a park – Al-Fegra Park – Luna Park for children

Al-Boa'ijan funfair...

## 2.2 Living in Madinah

### a) Renting an apartment

Unlike many other cities in the Kingdom, expatriates and locals live together. In the bigger cities, compounds are provided for foreigners. However, there are benefits in being able to mix with the locals including picking up some Arabic and getting to know the culture and very importantly getting to know your neighbors.

Typically when looking for a place to rent in Madinah, families are preferred to singles. It is unusual to have single men or single women looking for a place to rent. However, if you are single, then it is a good idea to get a reference or ask someone to come along with you.

There are various ways in which you can rent an apartment.

- Through a real estate agent – look around the locality and you may find an office/shop front with the words LILLIQAAR (Transliteration of the Arabic word) meaning estate agent.
- Going to the local shop and asking the shop-keeper if there are any places for rent locally.
- Using contacts such as colleagues or friends

Before you go about looking for a place to rent, it is important to make you aware of how one would describe the kind of place one is looking for.

#### **Number of rooms**

Most housing in Madinah is what could be termed “gender friendly” in other words; the planning has been done in such a way, so as to allow men and women to sit separately. Some abodes may even have two front doors.

#### **How many rooms do I need?**

##### **An example:**

- Typically, there are two (living or sitting) rooms for the guests. One room for male guests and a room for female guests.
- Then there may be two bedrooms.

▫ A lounge also known as a SAALA (This is a transliteration of the Arabic word). The family typically spends most of its time here.

Excluding bathrooms, kitchen and lounge (SAALA) the above apartment/house is considered to have four rooms.

This is a general rule, and should be used when looking for a place to live.

**Costs:**

Calculate costs at around SR5000 per room (per year) to give you a rough estimate (plus/minus as appropriate) of the likely costs of rent. Rent is quoted on a per annum (yearly) basis. Rent is often paid in cash on a six monthly basis.

Try to haggle if you can, however, estate agents may be reluctant to reduce the price. Sometimes offering to pay the years rent in advance may bring the price down.

Take an Arabic speaker along (THIS IS A MUST) as negotiation is likely to be in Arabic. The contract is likely to be in Arabic too, so you need someone to check this for you. *Do not sign on the contract until you are clear about the terms.*

**Other**

You will need to approach Saudi Telecom to arrange for a phone line. Go down to the local office with the mandatory Arabic speaker.

**b) Telephone & Internet Services**

There are three companies in Saudi Arabia Saudi Telecom Company (STC), Mobily, and Zain.

**1. Saudi Telecom Company (STC )**

The main and only telephone company in Saudi Arabia is STC (Saudi Telecom Company). Al-Jawal (Cell Phone) and Al-Hatif (telephone) are the main services of the Company.

▫ Al-Hatif Services: the service offers the customers locally, national or international lines. Customers can choose the tariff plan that fits his/her need.

How to Purchase the Service?

- Completing an ALHATIF Application Form
- For non-Saudis you need a copy of your Iqama and the original Iqama
- Ladies: An Identifier needed and he only might be (father, husband, son, or brother)

How to obtain the service?

Through one of the following:

- Customers Care Centre ( 907 )
- Customers Service Offices
- Visiting the website [www.stc.com.sa](http://www.stc.com.sa) or using the link <http://www.stc.com.sa/cwsPortal/cws.portal? nfpb=true& pageLabel=ahf & nfls=false>

▫ Al-Jawal Services: some of the services provided by the company are (Al-Jawal, family Al-Jawal, Sawa, location based service "LBS", messaging services, data services ,etc).

AL-Jawal comes with free bundled services included. Bundled services for AL-Jawal: (Call Divert, Call Waiting, Caller Identification, Fixed Numbers , Conference Call, Bill Reminder, Credit reminder)

AL-Jawal Tariff Plans and rates:

AL-Jawal offers its valued customers a variety of monthly subscription

plans and minute rates to meet each customer's needs and help them manage and control their calls budgets. Some of the tariffs plans and minute rates apply as follows :

SERVICE TYPE	JAWAL 25	JAWAL 35	JAWAL 45
Activation Fees/one time	50 Riyals	50 Riyals	50 Riyals
Subscription Fees/monthly	25	35	45

For more information on AlJawal and AlJawal services visit either the main website for STC [www.stc.com.sa](http://www.stc.com.sa)

Or the following link

[http://www.stc.com.sa/cwsPortal/cws.portal?\\_nfpb=true&\\_pageLabel=ajl&\\_nfls=false](http://www.stc.com.sa/cwsPortal/cws.portal?_nfpb=true&_pageLabel=ajl&_nfls=false)

▫ **Internet Services by STC**

**The internet services provided by STC are Easynet and DSL**

**Easynet**

Service Description:

This service provides the customers with direct internet access by calling the 3660077 number of their preferred ISP without having to subscribe or buy internet cards.

Service Benefits:

- Freedom to choose preferred ISP.
- More flexibility in selecting & changing ISP.
- Payment to one party only through telephone bill while STC will pay ISP.

Service

Installation

Fees:

Fees:

Free.

Subscription

Fees:

Free.

Usage Fees: 5 Halala per minute (SR 3 per Hour)

Customer will pay STC through his telephone bill. The amount includes connection fees and internet subscription.

- How to activate the service?

To activate the service, customer has to configure the setting of his computer by selecting one of Easynet service provider from the list provided by STC. Notice: some of ISP's has proxy

- How to obtain the service?

- Easynet works for all customers who have open access to dial-up internet.
- If the customer has blocked his/her internet service, it can be readily activated by calling Al-Hatif Customer care 907.
- Visit the following link for more information  
<http://www.saudinet.com.sa/html/www.php>

**DSL****Service Description**

This is an access service to connect with Internet Service Providers. It offers high speed, convenient and secure connectivity.

Connection	Monthly Charges
128 Kbps	180 SR
256 Kbps	180 SR
512 Kbps	270 SR
1 Mb ps	350 SR
2 Mb ps	590 SR

**How to obtain the service?**

- Visiting the website [www.stc.com.sa](http://www.stc.com.sa) or using the link
- Call Customers Care Centre ( 907 )

**2.Mobily**

Mobily is the official brand name of Etihad Etisalat, the second mobile service provider in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The company's services are mobile services only. Some of Mobily leading services and innovative packages in the Kingdom are MMS, LBS, international roaming for prepaid SIM cards in addition to GPRS and GPRS EDGE roaming, as well as other services.

How to purchase and obtain the service?

- Completing an Application Form
- Your Iqama, passport or ID.
- Visit one of the Customers Service Offices scattered throughout the Kingdom.
- Call Mobily customer service center at 0560101100
- Visit the website [www.mobily.com.sa](http://www.mobily.com.sa) and change to English language at the upper left hand corner of the page.

**3. Zain**

**Contacting Zain is as easy as 123, dial it within Zain network or 091230000 from any other phone or email address [info@sd.zain.com](mailto:info@sd.zain.com) and rest assured of a prompt response. We also invite you to read on to learn more about our customer philosophy...**

- Visiting the website [www.sd.zain.com](http://www.sd.zain.com). or using the link

**c) Electricity**

In Saudi Arabia both 110V & 220V volt powers are available. However, you should be careful when using the sockets as their not marked whether it is a 110 or a 220 outlet. You may ask the landlord about the outlets in your apartment/villa. Different kinds of plugs and pins are available. Some of the appliances can come with different plugs, so you can choose the appliance that fits your outlet voltage. For more information you can contact the following numbers:

Electricity Administration in Al-Madinah ☎ 8243393

Customers Services ☎ 8222931

Maintenance ☎ 8387485

**d) Water**

Water is supplied as desalinated seawater (normal tap supply) or as "sweet water". It is recommended that you drink still water is Bottled water available in shops, groceries and supermarkets. Some of the best bottled water companies are Al-Hada, Nouf, Al-Dawraq, and Quba'.

**e) Shopping**

Most shops and markets usually have two shifts, morning shift 10:00am – 1:00 or 2:00pm and an evening shift 5:00 pm – 11:00 or 12:00 pm. At prayer times (afternoon prayer, Magrib prayer and Isha' Prayer) these shops will close for about 20-30 minutes. However, in the month of Ramadan these shifts change.

Shopping will usually take place after Isha' prayer or Taraweeh prayers. Even during Ramadan the hours vary. At the beginning of Ramadan opening hours are different from the last ten days where shops may open until just before Fajir prayer, as shops and markets get crowded with people preparing and shopping for Eid Al-Fitr holiday.

▫ **Clothes :**

Most major malls and shops are located on Abu Baker (Sultana) Road, such as *Al-Dakheel Plaza 1, Al-Dakheel Plaza 2, Al-Sawani, City Max, and Al-Madinah International Markel*. Other shopping malls are *City Plaza* in the Central area of the Holy Mosque. Other mega malls are located on the Second Ring Road like *AlHasan Mall, AlNoor Mall, Mega Rashid Mall, and Aliat Al Madinah*. Quba' shops and malls on Quba' Road.

▫ **Home Appliances**

There are many home appliance shops in Madinah selling a selection of international brands, such as Samsung, LG, Sony, General Electric, Panasonic, etc. When buying from these shops, keep in mind the voltage that suits your outlet. You can always haggle with the seller for a lower price. Special offers and discounts are offered in these shops every once in a while. A list of some of the well known shops in Madinah is in Appendix 2.

▫ **Gifts & Souvenirs**

Most visitors to Al-Madinah like shopping in the Central area of the Holy Mosque for their gifts and souvenirs. There are lots of different kinds of shops spread around the Holy Mosque, such as jewelry shops, watches shops, clothing, toy shops, etc. The prices are generally moderate and costs less than shopping in town, although the authenticity of these products should be born in mind.

**f) Supermarkets**

24 / 7 Supermarkets

- Geant, on the intersection of Abu Baker Road (Sultana) Second Ring Road in AlRashid Mega Mall.
- Carrefour, on the Second Ring Road in AlNoor Mall.

- Panda Supermarket, Second Ring Road.
- Bin Dawood Supermarket has about 3 branches one of them is on Secon Ring Road.
- Mandarin Supermarket, Abu Thar Road.
- B.Bader Addeen Superstore, Second Ring Road.
- Al-Raya Supermarket, Prince AbdulMajeed (Heezam) Road.
- Sarawat Supermarket, Madinah International Market, on Abu Baker (Sultana) Road. Prices of goods are a bit higher than other supermarkets in this Sarawat.

These are the biggest major supermarkets in Al-Madinah. The best place for goods at reasonable prices. They stock a wide variety of food; fresh produce and house hold items.

**g) Restaurants & Eating Out:**

▫ ***Fast Food Restaurants***

Most fast food restaurants are located on Abu Baker (Sultana) Road, one of the main roads in Al-Madinah, or on Prince AbdulMajeed (Al-Heezam) Road. Some are international restaurants like McDonalds, Hardee's, Pizza Hut, Dominoes, Le Croissant, Sub Way, Burger King and KFC. Others are well known local restaurants like Kudu, Al-Tazaj, Al-Baik, Sheesh Kabab and Babel. The working hours vary from one restaurant to another. Generally, most restaurants are open around 10:00 am till 1:00am or 3:00am. Most of these restaurants have two separated sections, one for single men and the other for families. Some of them have home delivery. You will find a list of restaurants' home delivery numbers in Appendix 1.

▫ ***Grills & Barbeques***

These restaurants are known as "Lebanese or Syrian food restaurants". Here are some of the well-known ones:

Rotana, on Qurban Road.

Beruti, on Abu Baker (Sultana) Road.

Nabulsi, on Abu Baker (Sultana) Road.

Al-Rukn AL-Shamy, on Al-Matar (Airport) Road.

Bait Al-Madinah, on Hijra Road.

▫ ***Specialty Restaurants***

The Chinese Restaurant and Shin Yang Chinese Restaurant, are located on Al-Qiblatain Road.

The Indian Palace, on the Second Ring Road.

Other well-known restaurants are opening soon in both AlNoor Mall, such as Pizza Company, and AlRashid Mega Mall as Steak House.

Other specialty grand restaurants with rich various cuisines are located in Hotels in the Central Area around The Holy Mosque such as Dar Al-Taqwa Intercontinental Hotel, Oberoi Hotel and Hilton.

In general, as Madinah is developing more restaurants of different cuisines are opening. You can always ask your colleagues for well-known and recommend dining restaurants.

## h) Bookstores / Newspapers & Magazines :

### □ Bookstores :

The best and biggest bookstores in Al-Madinah are:

-Jarir Bookstore, which is next to Al-Qiblatain Mosque Abu Baker (Sultana) Road

☎ 8466761 [www.jarirbookstore.com](http://www.jarirbookstore.com)

-Obeikan Bookshop, Junction of Said El Shouhada Road with Second Ring Road,

☎ 920020209

-Dar AlZaman Bookstroe, it has about 2 branches, one is near the Central Area of The Holy Prophet's Mosque and the other is on Abu Thar Road.

### □ Newspapers & Magazines :

#### International Newspapers

Newspapers from US and UK cities are not commonly available. Also, the delivery of foreign newspapers is slow and irregular, and they may be censored.

#### Local Newspapers

Three English language papers are published in the Kingdom, all of which contain international news. These are *The Arab News*, *Saudi Gazette*, and *Riyadh Daily*. They all cost SR2. the Gazette is more business oriented than the others but the quality of writing is lower.

All newspapers are used by the Government to make official announcements of various kinds.

Prayer times are published daily in all Saudi Arabian Newspapers. You'll find them in a small box, usually on page 2.

#### Magazines

Besides newspapers, there are quite a few English language magazines readily available. You'll find some of them like *Times*, *Newsweek*, *National Geographic*, *Business Week*, *PC*, *Windows*, *Arabian Woman*, *Reader's Digest*, *Parents*, *Womens' Weekly* and others available at Jarir Bookstore, Abu Baker (Sultana) Road.

In addition, a fair number of specialized magazines such as computer, fashion, furniture, sports, and hobby interests are on sale in other cities like Riyadh and Jeddah.

## i) Libraries

### King Abdul Aziz Public Library

King Abdul Aziz Library is on the western side of the Prophet's Holy Mosque. It is a five-floor library, divided into sections, such as The Qura'n Section, valuable rare books section, children's section, women's section, etc. The library offers its services from 7:30 am–2:30 pm and for females from 4:00pm–10:00 pm everyday.

### The Public Library

The Public Library is in "Hay Al-Bahar" District in Qurban Road. Its collection is over 31,000 books and references. Its divided into 3 sections; the First section is for annuals and newspapers, the second is for childrens' books and the third is for references and resources. It opens from 8:00 am – 2:00 pm and for females from 4:00 pm – 9:00 pm.

## j) Computers

### Buying a Computer

#### Computer Stores

There are many computer stores spread around Al-Madinah. "Extra ", one of the biggest appliances stores in *Aliat AlMadinah Mall*, sells computers and computer

accessories. Some of the major bookstores such as *Jarir Bookstore* and *Al-Obeikan bookshop* also sell PCs and Laptops. As things change rapidly in this sphere, it is best to seek advice after arrival.

#### **Prices**

Prices are generally lower than UK but higher than US. Occasionally, exceptionally good bargains can be had for the latest hardware and software. Some computer stores in Al-Madinah advertise in newspapers, especially *Al-Madinah Newspaper*, for special offers on PCs and Laptops.

#### **Warranties**

As anywhere, check out warranties and service agreements before finalizing purchase.

#### **Internet Cafes**

Internet cafes, as computer stores, are many in Al-Madinah. In almost every area and neighborhood you'll find an Internet café, for males only. So, it is best to seek advice after arrival. For females, there is *Exapanado Café* in *Al-Dakeel Plaza* on Abu Baker (Sultana) Road. Other female Café's might be opening soon in the same area, Abu Baker Road.

#### **Prices**

The fee for using the net in Internet cafes is usually SR 10 – 15, higher than home based internet.

#### **k) Hospitals and Clinics**

A list of the main private hospitals, some dentists and opticians is given in Appendix 3.

#### **l) Money and Banking**

##### **Currency**

The Saudi currency is the Riyal. Riyal banknotes are issued in denominations of 1, 5, 10, 20, 50, 100, 200 and 500 riyals.

The Riyal is divided into 100 halalas. Coins are issued in the value of 5, 10, 25, 50 and 100 halalas. Yet, coins in Saudi Arabia are not as commonly used as in US or UK. Saudi Arabia has a mainly cash economy, with scarcely any use of cheques, but with the usual ATMS ( cash machines), Bank cards, credit cards and Visa cards.

**Note:** Visa cards are not as widely accepted here as abroad. Also, many stores display visa signs whilst in reality they do not accept card payment. When negotiating a price it is wise to mention, at the beginning that you will be paying by visa in order to avoid a 2.5 % charge on your negotiated price. Thus, it is

recommended that you make sure you carry enough cash when shopping, or ask about where and how to use pre-paid versions of cards like Visas and Masters.

##### **Banks**

Salaries could be paid directly to a bank account, so opening an account is an essential operation. An account can be opened at any bank, once you have your Iqama, though it is recommended that you open an account in the same bank your salary is paid to. All

Saudi Banks have the same working hours. On weekdays the working hours are 9:00 am – 4:00 pm. Very few banks, usually the main branch open on Thursdays from 9:00 am – 12:00 pm.

NOTE: Weekends in Saudi Arabia are Thursdays and Fridays. Yet there are some private companies, institutions and banks that work half time on Thursdays.

### **Remitting Funds Abroad**

There are no restrictions on sending funds out of Saudi Arabia.

### **Exchange Rates**

The Riyal to dollar rate is unaffected by daily fluctuations in currency exchanges and is adjusted only by the Saudi Arabian Monetary Agency (SAMA). At the present time, the exchange rate is around SR3.75 to US\$ 1.00. The Riyal to Pound sterling rate does fluctuate, usually between SR 6 – SR 7 to GBP 1.00.

### **Money changers**

In addition to the banks, there are many money-changers in Al-Madinah. You'll find them amongst the shops in the Central area of the Prophet's Mosque. Money-changers have some advantages:

- Banks in Saudi Arabia exchange only dollars, where as money exchangers will exchange all kinds of currencies.
- They tend to offer a slightly more competitive exchange rate.
- Service tends to be faster.
- They can convert your cash into foreign currency if you are planning to travel.
- Their fees for drafts and other forms of transfer tend to be somewhat lower.

### **m) Schools**

Unlike most other big cities such as Jeddah, Riyadh and Dammam, the choice of international schools available in Madinah at the time of writing are few.

#### General set up of schools

Schools have separate girls and boys sections. This is required by law.

Kindergarten (KG) years 1 and 2 tend to be co-educational.

After the KG years, schools are expected to comply with the law. English is spoken in most international (Non-Saudi) schools. If you wish your children to pursue Arabic language based education, then it is best to take an Arabic speaker along with you. For girls' schools, females will be required to liaise with the school authorities, and so a female Arabic speaker needs to be taken along. The opposite applies to boys' (male) schools. If you do not know anyone who speaks Arabic, the best advice is that you ask a colleague or friend who may know someone. Most expatriates who live here have already gone through the process that you are about to go through and so plenty of advice and tips should be available.

#### **International schools**

##### ▫ **Al-Aqeeq International School**

Location: Near Abu Baker (Sultana Road)– Al-Azhari District ☎ 8460094

- **Al-Aqeeq** is divided into an American section and Indian and Pakistani section. In order to get through to the correct section, call the main phone number and ask for the relevant section. ☎ 8643060
- American Section (Al-Aqeeq)**

Our understanding is that the American section is still in the process of development and approval by the local educational authorities. However, they do cater for years 1 through 9 at the time of writing. They also have a KG section.

Fees start from SR5000 and can be as high as SR8000. It is believed that fees will start from SR12000 for year 10 onwards, however the year has yet to be introduced.

Teaching staff are a mixture of Western, Middle Eastern and Asian.

#### **(Al-Aqeeq) Pakistani/Indian Sections**

The Pakistani and Indian schools cater for classes from year 1 to Year 12 and follow their respective home country education systems.

Fees typically start from SR250 per month.

Teachers are mainly from Pakistan and India.

#### ▫ **The Little World of Learning**

Location: Near Al-Awali, behind Khareji Mosque ☎ 837 3727

This is registered as a Kindergarten nursery and caters for KG1 and KG2. Fee information is not available. Please call the number above.

The British system is catered for.

#### ▫ **Darul-Hijra Group**

Location: Near Quba Mosque ☎ 848 6988

There are Pakistani, Indian and Arabic sections.

Fees start from SR 250 per month. No fees are payable for the summer months.

Teachers are mainly from Pakistan, India and Egypt and follow the respective educational systems. Call the phone number above for further details.

### **Saudi System Schools (Non-English)**

#### **Private Schools**

##### **Manarat Schools**

Location: Al-Khalidiyah near Madinah Passport Office ☎ 8481267 – 8481421

The Manarat Schools group is one of the most well known schools in the KSA.

These are private schools which follow for the Saudi system of education although in other cities the American and British systems are catered for too.

Fees start from about SR4000 and can range up to SR8000.

Teachers are a mixture of local and foreign.

##### **Al-Khandak National Schools**

For information please contact ☎ 8366662 – 8366055

##### **King AbdulAziz Ideal Schools for Girls**

Location: Al-Hada district. ☎

Most of the teachers are Saudi. The school caters for classes from KG1 till 9<sup>th</sup> grade.

Fees start from SR6500 and ranges up to SR11,000.

##### **Daru AL-Hikma Schools for Girls**

Location: Al-Azharey District ☎ 8464111 – 8464222

For information please contact the above number.

#### **Government Schools**

Government schools are free. However, they are hard to get into if you are not a Saudi. Based on the experiences of a few expatriates, it has been shown that a little bit of persistence and determination can work wonders with the help of an Arabic speaker.

There are two types of schools:

The **Standard** schools follow the Saudi curriculum

The **Tahfeeth** schools follow the Saudi curriculum but with an added emphasis on Islamic studies and memorization of the Qur'an.

These schools can be found locally and it is a matter of driving around and locating a school that you may be interested in. Note: Though Tahfeez schools are generally government schools you will find some that are private. For example, Baraem Al-Eman for Qura'n Recitation, Al-Manarat Street in the Eastern Harrah (Al-Harrah Al-Shargeya) ☎ 8366779

## 2.3 Transportation in Madinah

Many newcomers wish to acquire transportation soon after arrival. However, loans cannot be obtained within the first year of contract so if you want a new car, you will have to bring money with you. A good used car can cost around SR20,000. Shipping a car into Saudi Arabia is not recommended. It is a very lengthy process and involves complicated bureaucracy.

### a) Driving License :

All the residents of the Kingdom who wish to drive a car must obtain a Saudi license renewable every 5 years – International Driving Permits are not sufficient. The cost of obtaining a driver's license is SR75. If you already possess a valid license from your country with a minimum of three months validity remaining, you can get a Saudi license. If you do not hold a license, it is possible to take a driving course. The procedure for renewing the driver's license is the same as that for obtaining a license in the first place.

### b) Buying a car

- **Buying a new car :** you need the following for buying a new car :
  - A certificate of Service from Personnel;
  - A copy of your Iqama;
  - A copy of your University ID;
  - A copy of your Saudi driving license ;
  - A copy of the front passport pages and your visa.
- **Buying a used car :**
  - Both buyer and seller go to an authorized dealer with the car.
  - The seller must produce the vehicle's registration card "istimara" and a valid MVPI ( Motor Vehicle Periodic Inspection ) Certificate.
  - The buyer needs to show his Iqama and Saudi driving license.
  - The buyer is obliged to pay a certain amount for the transfer of ownership, SR 300, to obtain his own "istimara".
  - After three days, the new "istimara" can be collected. However, it is important to note that the 3-year period of validity of the new " istimara" is dated according to the original document held by the seller. Thus, if the seller has used up one year, the buyer is left with two.

### c) Car Parking

- **General:** It is not easy to find suitable parking spots or spaces in most areas in town. However, most major shopping centers and supermarkets have limited dedicated parking lots. If you intend to pray in the Holy Mosque of Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings upon him, it is best advised to use the underground parking lots, which cost only SR 1 per hour.

- **University Parking:** Taibah University has limited covered parking spaces for its faculty and staff. However, you are free to park in any of the undesignated parking spots.

#### d) Renting a Car

There are several national and international car rental agencies located in Madinah. Prices vary from one agency to another based on the time length of the rental. The longer the period the more you could bargain and cut a good deal. You are required to have a valid driver's license and pay a certain amount of insurance. However, be aware that you may be required to pay a certain amount of money (up to 500SR) in case of an accident despite the insurance plan you signed on.

A list of car rental is given in Appendix 5.

#### ▫ Papers to carry at all times :

- Your driving license
- The latest car inspection report
- The original blue registration card "istimara" ( it is advisable to keep a photocopy of the original at home )
- Your Iqama
- Your university ID card or your work ID
- Insurance papers ( not a legal requirement )
- ELC Director, Vice Dean, or Administrative contact numbers.

#### e) Bus Services

##### ▫ Local Buses

Public buses are operated by the Saudi Arabian Public Transport Company (SAPTCO). Visit their website for more details [www.saptco.com.sa](http://www.saptco.com.sa)

##### ▫ Bus Schedules and Fares

The company has good and suitable price packages. Children under 2 years travel free. Children between 2 and 12, and Disabled Persons, travel at half price. Moreover, one authorized companion for each disabled passenger is allowed to travel at half fare.

Students are entitled to a "Free Return" on production of Student Identification. It is a round trip ticket for the price of a single. This means a discount of 50%.

A 24% discount is available for Round Trip tickets on most routes bought at SAPTCO terminals. Other discounted fares are made available from time to time. You can check the "What's New" section on, [www.saptco.com.sa](http://www.saptco.com.sa) , for the latest offers and discounts.

#### f) Taxis

In Madinah there are taxis, usually white vehicles and are very few. In order to hail one, simply shout TAXI or wave your hand and they will stop for you. How much should you pay them? It depends on where you are and where you want to go, but usually they don't charge more than SR10-15. If you bargain, you may pay less. Taxi drivers are generally very friendly and are mostly from South East Asians and Saudis. However, their driving may not be as friendly!

### 3) Taibah University :

#### 3.1 Documents to bring on first arrival

Bring original or notarized copies of the following documents:

- Degrees and course/ training courses certificate.

- Teaching certificate.
- Your Iqama / passport.
- Your Resume.
- Reference letters and experience certificates.

### 3.2 Getting setup

#### a) Initial Costs :

Newcomers should be advised that initial arrival is not without its costs so they should check on current regulations and come as prepared as possible.

#### b) Photos :

Newcomers should come armed with a good supply of ID photos (20) for themselves and (10) for each member of their family.

#### c) Iqama

The Iqama is the Saudi residence permit ( ID card ). You need it to obtain a driver's license, buy a car, travel in Saudi Arabia, check into Hotels, cash a check, etc. *It must be carried with you all the time.* Police may not accept a photocopy. *Legally, it must be obtained within three months of arrival in the Kingdom from The General Directorate of Passports.* It is usually obtained within a month arrival. For Muslim non-Saudis, this is a small green booklet. The Iqama is normally provided by your employer.

These are the procedures for obtaining an Iqama:

- Your University or work ID card, obtained from Official Affairs Administration Building.
- Your passport with an Official entry stamp from the Saudi Embassy in your country.
- Fill in the application form correctly, using a type writer or a computer.
- The Iqama currently costs SR 500 for one year, SR 1000 for two years. You have to pay for it yourself. Be sure to bring enough funds from home to cover this cost.
- 3 photos for each passport holder.
- 3 copies of a group photo of your wife and accompanying children (under 18).
- You may have to pay an additional SR 100 – 250 for obtaining a work ID ( this is only when applying for an Iqama for the first time ) .

Arrivals from Asian countries must present a cholera vaccination certificate. Those coming from African countries may be asked to repeat the blood tests required for an entry visa.

#### Renewal :

The Iqama is valid for two years ( Hejra calendar ) and then you must pay for renewal. Officially, it can be renewed up to two months in advance of the expiry date. Follow the same procedures as in applying for the first time.

#### Potential problems with your Iqama :

In case of loss :

- Report loss to passport office or Police and your employer.
- Take your passport with you to the passport office Fill in the Loss Report Form, at the passport office.
- Fill in the application form for the new one.

- Place notice advertising the loss in a newspaper ( required by law ), cost SR150.
- Pay SR100-300 for replacement, depending on validity. Replacement takes 6-8 weeks.

#### d) Exit/Re-entry Visas

Exit/Re-entry visas (combined in one stamp) are issued by *The General Directorate of Passports* only after the residence permit (Iqama) has been obtained.

- **Single Exit/Entry Visa :**  
Single Exit-Entry Visa costs SR200 per passport, payable on application and allow for one exit and one re-entry to the Kingdom. They are valid for two months for Faculty and for six months and over for dependents, dated from date of departure. NOTE : months are calculated based on Hijra calendar so the validity should be checked carefully to avoid problems on re-entry.
- **Multiple Exit/Entry Visas:**  
These are available for a charge of SR500 and are valid for a period of six ( Hijri ) months from date of issue and allow unlimited exits/re-entries within the valid period.
- **Visitors to Saudi Arabia :**  
Visas to enter Saudi Arabia are, in normal circumstances, issued only to employees and their dependents. However, it is possible, although difficult, to get a Visitor's Visa for close members of your family ( parents, female children of any age, and male children up to age 18). There are certain times of the year when visas are restricted, for example between the 2 Eid Holidays, because of the large numbers of visas issued and processed during this time.  
For further information about Iqama and visas you can visit the General Directorate of Passports website <http://www.gdp.gov.sa/english/english-index.html>

### 3.3 Gate Policy

Taibah University has an open gate policy. However, cars may be stopped at any time if there is no sticker on the car. Each car must have a sticker to be permitted to the University. To obtain a car sticker, you'd need a letter from the Dean of Academic Services or from the ELC Director. Then, go to the Office Affairs Administration in the Administration building to complete the required procedures.

### 3.4 University Facilities

#### a) Mens' University Facilities

##### ▫ The library

The university library is open from 8:00 am to 8:00 pm. Saturday to Wednesday. A large variety of books is available. There are four floors.

Do not expect a Western standard as far as the library is concerned as it is still very much at a development stage.

Books in the English language are available on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor. You should be able to find books, magazines and booklets relating to a wide variety of subjects.

Ask at reception for further details.

Internet access is available on the ground floor. To make sure that you have access to a PC, it is better to go as early as possible.

- **The Bookshop & Stationery**

A small bookshop is also present on the premises, which at the same time sells stationery items. Basic items such as pens, pencils and files are available.

- **The Photocopy shop**

Based very close to the bookshop, the photocopy shop is available for staff to photocopy in bulk. Copying can usually be done while you wait.

- **The Medical clinic**

A doctor is present on the premises and is available for consultation both by students and teachers.

- **Internet facilities/club**

Internet access is available on the ground floor of the library

- **Cafeterias and Restaurants**

There is a cafeteria in the new horseshoe shaped building near the male entrance to the university.

Breakfast is available from 8:00 am to 10:00 am and lunch is available from 12:00 pm to 2:00 pm. The normal cost is SR10. The portions are quite large and are worth the cost.

There is also a small tuck shop which sells tea, water and sandwiches. This normally opens at around 7:00 am and stays open until 4:00 pm.

- **Campus Bank/ATM**

There is Al-Rajhi bank present on the campus from where cheques can be cashed. Accounts can also be opened in the branch. Ask at the branch for further details. The bank is located next to the Post office.

An ATM is available outside the campus, just before the University entrance gate.

- **The English Language Center :** The ELC is located in building number 2 next to the Administration building. This is a single storey building. There is a large white sign at the front of the building with the letters ELC.

- **Information Technology Center 'ITC' :**

**b) Ladies' University facilities**

- **The Library**

It is on the first floor of building 8 " known as the Library building". The Library offers its services from 8:00 am–2:00 pm. It has a section for educational magazines, annuals and newspapers. There's a photocopy section where you can copy any of the library's resources. If you need to borrow a book from the library, you will need to fill in a card which remains with the librarian.

- **The Bookshop & Stationers**

The bookshop "Al-Manar" is a bookshop and stationers. It opens from 8:00 am till 2:00 pm.

- **The Photocopy Shop**

The photocopy shop" Dar Hafith", next to "Al-Manar Bookshop & Stationery", is mostly used by the University's students but can be used by

Teachers. It is open from 8:00 am – 2:00 pm. Although, it is over-crowded sometimes between 9:00 am and 2:00 pm.

▫ **The Medical Clinic**

When you have obtained your ID card, you can go to the clinic to register. Alternatively, you can wait until you need an appointment. When you arrive at the clinic, you would be asked to fill in a form so you can have your own medical file. You don't need to pay for medicine but you will need a doctor's prescription to obtain medicine.

The Medical Clinic is in the Medicine building on the ground floor.

 8460008, Extension 3310

▫ **The Gym**

It is located in the Student Service Center, next to the Administration building. You can visit the Gym for details and information on fees and services available for faculty and staff.

▫ **Internet Club**

It is located in the Student Service Center, next to the Administration building. It is open from 8:00 am – 2:00 pm. The rate for using the net is SR 10 per hour. They offer printing services too. For colored printing you pay SR 3 per sheet, and for black & white printing SR 1 per sheet.

There is also free net access for students and staff in building 8 "The Library building" on the ground floor.

▫ **The Nursery**

The University's Nursery is a great facility provided for both students, faculty and staff. You can leave your child in here whilst being able to check on him/her whenever you can when you're in campus. Registration takes place before the beginning of the new academic year, you leave information about yourself and your child, and they call you back if there's vacancy. The monthly fee is SR350 and semester fee is SR1000.

Working hours: 7:45 am – 2:15 pm.

▫ **Cafeterias & Restaurants**

There are two restaurants, " Al-Tamimi Restaurant" and another Restaurant, in the Student Service Center. There are also two cafeterias, one is next to Al-Tamimi Restaurant and the other is in the TV-Building, known as "Al-Dagal" Cafeteria. There is a snack bar in the College of Medicine, too.

▫ **Campus Bank / ATM**

There is Al-Rajhi Bank in the administration building on the ground floor. It offers its services to the students and staff from

An ATM is available outside the campus, just before the Old University entrance gate.

▫ **The English Language Center:** the ELC is located in building 8, the Library building on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor.

**Information Technology Center 'ITC'** : located on the ground floor in building 8, the library building. It provides staff and faculty maintenance services for their

computers. You may need to fill in a form when asking for maintenance.  
☎ 8460008, Extension 3837, 3836.

## 4) Appendices

### Appendix 1

#### Fast Food Delivery Numbers

Hardee's: Abu Baker(Sultana) Branch ☎8451560

Prince AbdulMajeed Heezam Branch☎8644080

Burger King, Abu Baker Road ☎

Subway, Abu Baker Road ☎

Kudu ☎8474190 (there are about four branches)

KFC Sultana Branch☎ 8464467, Heezam Branch☎ 8641841 (there are other branches as well)

Pizza hut ☎ 8274512 (there are about four branches)

Dominos☎ 8610292- 8610265 – 8610261 (one branch in Sultana another is in AlHeezam)

Babel, Heezam branch ☎8377553 (it has three other branches)

Le Croissant Qurban Branch ☎ 8280999 (another branch is in Sultana)

### Appendix 2

#### Home Appliances

Barayan in AbuThar Road, near Mandarin Supermarket. This shop has other branches in Madinah. You can ask your colleagues or friends about the nearest one to you. ☎ 8268180

Extra, in Aliat Al-Madinah Mall,

Ghassan Trading Est. ☎ 8640516

Al-Qadhi Electronics ☎ 8235749

Al-Jafalei & Bros. Appliances & Air conditioning Co ☎ 8154668

Al-Said Houseware Stores ☎ 8221085

Balbaid Electrical Materials Store ☎ 8340411

Balsharaf Trading Est. ☎ 8238645

### Appendix 3

#### Private Hospital Numbers

Saudi National Hospital ☎ 8444444

Saudi German Hospital ☎ 8406000

Al-Dar Hospital ☎ 8365757

Al-Zahraa Hospital ☎ 8486220

Dr.Hamid S Al\_Ahmadi Hospitals ☎ 8363332

Al-Muwasah Paediatrics and Newborns Hospital ☎ 8422211

#### Dental Clinics Numbers

Dr.Abdul Wahid AL-Bakkari Clinics ☎ 8228866

Dr.Abdul Rahman Al-Aqali Polyclinic ☎8270107

Dr.Waffa Medical Center for Dentistry & Plastic Clinics ☎ 8455550

#### Dentists

Dr.Ibrahim M. Masoud Dental Specialized Clinics ☎ 8230745

### **Opticians & Optical**

Al-Magrabi Optical ☎ 8454218

Al-Bashawri Glasses & Optical Stores ☎ 8229577

Elyas Optical Store ☎ 8364800

## **Appendix 4**

### **Banks**

Samba ☎ 8243484 [/www.samba.com/eng\\_index.htm](http://www.samba.com/eng_index.htm)

Saudi British Bank ☎ 8267472

Banque Saudi Fransi ☎ 8388101

Samba Financial Group ☎ 8232924 – 8250096

Al-Rajhi Banking & Investment Corp. ☎ 8681733

## **Appendix 5**

### **Car Rentals**

Budget ☎ 8466182

Al-Obairi Rent a Car ☎ 8365877

Al-Zaman Car Rental Group ☎ 8364995

The Best Rent a Car Co ☎ 8456270

## **Appendix 6**

Taibah University ☎ 8460008

Islamic University ☎ 8474080

## **Appendix 7**

### **The General Directorate of Passports**

Al-Madinah AL-Munawara ☎ 8480903

Jeddah ☎ 02- 6315858

Riyadh ☎ 01- 4057000

## **Appendix 8**

### **Important Numbers**

Information/Maintenance numbers	
International Information	900
Telephone Maintenance	904
Telephone Directory Information	905
Cable Location Inquiry	906
Hotline (Ordinary Telephones )	907
Time Inquiry Service (Speaking Clock) Arabic	920001000
Time Inquiry Service (Speaking Clock) English	920001100

Saudi Airlines	80222222
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Emergency Telephone Numbers	
Police	999
Fire	998
Ambulance	997
Traffic Accidents	993

Travel Agencies	
Al-Hashmy Tourism & Aviation Agency	8266152
Al-Tayar Holidays Travel & Tourism Agency	8150180
Al-Zaman Travel & Tourism Agency	8387063
Attar Tourism Co	8368644
Quick Aviation Agency	8288738
Rizq International Travels	8240234

## Appendix 9

### Embassies

#### Australian Embassy

PO Box 94400

Riyadh 11693

Telephone: 01- 4887788 ( Outside working hours 01-4887812 )

Fax: 01- 4887973

#### Canadian Embassy

PO Box 94321

Diplomatic Quarter

Riyadh 11693

Telephone: 01- 4882288 / 01- 4880275

Fax: Commercial section 01- 4881997 / 01- 4880137 Emigration 01- 4881361

#### Canadian Consulate

Canadian Embassy Consular Services

PO Box 22593

Riyadh 11416

Telephone: 01- 4882288

#### United Kingdom Embassy, Riyadh

PO Box 94351

Riyadh

Telephone: 01- 4880077

Fax : 01- 4882373

#### United States Embassy

PO Box 94309

Riyadh 11693

Telephone: 01- 4883800

Fax: 01- 4887360