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This single chapter on business travel is excerpted from the FY 2005 Country Commercial Guide for Kuwait. The full text of the report is also available on this website.

***CHAPTER 9
BUSINESS TRAVEL***

BUSINESS CUSTOMS

Visiting U.S. business executives will have no communication problems with their Kuwaiti counterparts as English is widely spoken and many Kuwaiti businesspersons have been educated abroad.

Private companies work six days a week (Saturday through Thursday). Some companies work from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.; others work from 8:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. and from 4:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. On Thursdays, companies work from 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Government offices including the American Embassy close on Thursdays and Fridays. Banks and insurance companies close on Fridays and Saturdays.

Appointments with managers often take place after 9:00 a.m. Many Kuwaiti top executives and decision-makers maintain extensive travel schedules outside Kuwait as a result of their wide range of business activities. Many Kuwaitis travel during the summer months to escape the oppressive heat. They, however, remain in constant communication with their businesses.

Kuwait is an Islamic country. It attracts nationals from over 120 countries who live and work here. Kuwaitis are hospitable and they usually invite their foreign guests to their diwanias (meeting places) in the evenings, or even to their chalets (beach/vacation cottages) on weekends.

TRAVEL ADVISORY AND VISAS

U.S. citizens traveling to Kuwait can get their visas at the airport on arrival. Valid passports remain required for entry. For more information concerning entry requirements, travelers may contact the Embassy of Kuwait in Washington D.C. at telephone number: (202) 966-0702, or the Kuwaiti Consulate in New York City, telephone number: (212) 973-4318. A downloadable visa application can be found at www.kuwait-info.org/Travel_Information/visa_requirements.html

Business visitors traveling on a temporary visit visa to Kuwait must observe the length of stay permitted in their visa. Currently, most visit visas are valid for ten years, multiple entries and stays of up to one month, extendable to several months. Fines are charged for each day overstayed; the fine is currently KD 10 per day, per person (approximately US \$31.00).

Visitors to Kuwait should be aware of the dangers presented by unexploded land mines and other ordnance throughout the country. Stay on main roads and do not travel on unpaved roads; avoid open areas and the desert.

Kuwait's crime rate is moderate and violent crime is rare. Crime against the American community is low. Sexual harassment of women does occur, and suitable precautions should be taken. Visitors to Kuwait should dress conservatively, exercise prudent security measures and be sensitive to social and cultural norms in this conservative Islamic country. Use of narcotics is increasing in Kuwait, and visitors found with illegal narcotics or substances are subjected to tough criminal penalties. Vehicle accident and death rates are particularly high in Kuwait. Good road surfaces, powerful cars and lax enforcement of traffic regulations combine to make speeding commonplace and driving very hazardous. Foreigners may rent cars during their stay in Kuwait. They must have an international or an American driver's license.

No alcohol, pork products, or pornographic materials may be imported into or used in Kuwait. If prohibited items are discovered in a traveler's effects, he or she may be arrested and prosecuted.

HOLIDAYS

Government offices close in observance of the following holidays: New Year's Day; Kuwait National Day (February 25); Kuwait Liberation Day (February 26); and a number of Islamic holidays which are: Eid Al-Adha (Jan.21-25, 2005); Islamic New year (February 11, 2005); The Prophet's birthday (April 21, 2005); Eid Al-Fitr (November 4-6, 2005).

Government offices operate on limited business hours during the holy month of Ramadan (the dates of which vary from one year to the next). Visitors are advised to check with their hosts to avoid scheduling conflicts.

Appointments should not be scheduled on Thursdays and Fridays. Official and business visits are not encouraged during Ramadan, as the government and businesses operate on shortened hours.

BUSINESS INFRASTRUCTURE

Transportation

The road system in Kuwait is modern, well-lit and easily navigated by car. U.S. visitors should be aware, however, that there may not be street addresses in older sections of Kuwait City. It is always best to call ahead to confirm directions and the exact location of the company or ministry one intends to visit. Public transportation is available but unreliable. Air-conditioned taxis are readily available at major hotels or taxi stands. Orange taxis should be avoided as they are used as commuter shuttles by day laborers. Their drivers are often illiterate and may not speak English. Car rental is also readily available to U.S. visitors with a valid U.S. driver's license (which permits one to drive in Kuwait for the duration of the visitor's visa). U.S. car rentals such as AVIS, Budget, Hertz, etc. are also available. U.S. motorists should

Be careful of Kuwait's traffic conditions, which are often dangerous as a result of speed, large vehicles and limited adherence to traffic regulations.

Language

Arabic is the official language in Kuwait. English is the second language for most of the expatriate community and the principal language of the business community.

Communications

Kuwait has an adequate communications network. It is possible to make calls from Kuwait to any part of the world from apartments (for residents), from offices, and from any hotel. Faxes may be sent from the

business centers of leading local hotels, such as the Sheraton Kuwait Hotel, Crowne Plaza Hotel, Safir International Hotel, W.J. Marriott, Marriott Courtyard, Hilton and Resort Hotel, or Radisson SAS Kuwait Hotel and several others. However, visitors can use locally purchased calling cards but cannot dial “800” numbers in making calls from Kuwait.

Secretarial support is available in business centers at five-star hotels. One page of typing of English text costs approximately US \$5.00. A business executive hotel guest may use these services on a walk-in basis. Written translation from English to Arabic text or vice versa costs approximately US \$17.00 per document up to a maximum of 350 words per document. Oral translation costs about US \$336.00 per day.

Housing

Americans visiting Kuwait will have no problem finding modern, spacious and air-conditioned housing. There are numerous luxurious residential complexes, villas, and apartments. Short-term visitors may stay in hotels or in furnished apartments, which are usually rented for minimum stays of one week. Water and electricity are subsidized by the Kuwaiti government; consumers are charged KDO.800 (US \$2.70) for 1,000 Imperial gallons of water and KD 0.002 (US \$0.07) per kilowatt-hour of electricity. In luxurious accommodation, water and power bills are part of the rental and are paid by the landlord. The Ministry of Energy (Electricity and Water) is considering increasing electricity and water prices. Local telephone service is free; however, there is an annual service charge of KD 30 (about US \$100) on each residential telephone line and KD 70 (about US \$230) on each commercial line.

The approximate cost of a medium-size hospitality function at a five-star hotel would be US \$35-40 per guest for a first-class function. A week's notice is usually required for such functions.

Health

U.S. business visitors to Kuwait encounter few health problems. They should arrive prepared to cope with the extreme heat and dust storms during the summer months. Although tap water is safe to drink, it is recommended to use bottled water as an added precaution. Food in Kuwait, including salads and dairy products, is generally fresh. A wide range of cuisine is available at many restaurants.

The quality of medical care in Kuwait varies depending on the facility, the personnel on duty and the nature of the medical problem. Although many medications (mainly American) are available in the country, visitors are advised to bring sufficient supplies of their prescription medication (as well as a signed prescription) for their entire stay. Visitors should consider purchasing short-term medical insurance which includes a medical evacuation option in the event of a medical emergency that would require treatment in the U.S. Should medical care be required while in Kuwait, there are two options: the government system or the private sector. For routine care in the government system, access is through the polyclinic (neighborhood clinic) located in the district in which you reside. For emergency care, you may access any government hospital casualty (emergency) room. There are seven regional hospitals and numerous suburban polyclinics run by the Ministry of Public Health. A civil ID card is required to receive care in the government system (in an emergency a passport is sufficient).

The Ministry of Health now implements compulsory medical insurance on all expatriates living in the country. Visitors who request services may receive them at public hospitals as well as in private hospitals on a fee basis.

Food

In addition to Middle Eastern cuisine, local restaurants offer a wide variety of international selections, including French, Italian, Indian, Chinese, Japanese, Mexican and American (fast food). Food inspection is under the strict supervision of the health department of the respective municipality. Imported food supplies must be cleared with a certificate from the health authorities.

Please Note: Country Commercial Guides are available to U.S. exporters on the website: <http://www.export.gov> or contact the U.S. Commercial Service office in Kuwait by fax at (965) 538-0281 or email at kuwait.city.office.box@mail.doc.gov

Country Commercial Guides can be ordered in hard copy or on diskette from the **National Technical Information Service (NTIS)** at **1-800-553-NTIS**. U.S. exporters seeking general export information/assistance or country-specific commercial information should consult with their nearest **Export Assistance Center** of the **U.S. Department of Commerce's Trade Information Center** at **(800) USA-TRADE**, or go to one of the following websites: www.usatrade.gov or www.tradeinfo.doc.gov

To the best of our knowledge, the information contained in this report is accurate as of the date published. However, **The Department of Commerce** does not take responsibility for actions readers may take based on the information contained herein. Readers should always conduct their own due diligence before entering into business ventures or other commercial arrangements. **The Department of Commerce** can assist companies in these endeavors.