

Saudi Arabia National Day Special

A welcoming hospitality awaits kingdom visitors

Sept. 23 is when Saudi Arabians celebrate the birth of their country. The date commemorates the 1932 royal decree of King Abdulaziz bin Abdul Rahman Al Saud, popularly known as Ibn Saud, which transformed the dual kingdoms of Nejd and Hejaz into the unified Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Yet for nearly a century now, the country has retained a spirit of diversity that welcomes people from all over the world and invites them to enjoy Arab culture and hospitality. What better time to experience it all than during Saudi National Day?

The holiday is celebrated with dances, songs and poetry, exemplified by *ardah*. Originally an Arab battle dance meant to display a warrior's fighting spirit, *ardah* has grown over time into a recital of poetry, singing and synchronized movement with sword in hand to the beat of drums by groups of performers in traditional garb. With a focus on the arts and a weapon found on the country's flag, *ardah* sword dancing weaves together the culture and history of Saudi Arabia into one unforgettable performance.

Visitors looking to connect even more with the soul of Saudi Arabia are invited to enjoy horseback riding, said to have been a favorite pastime of the king. For this, the Al-Jazeera Equestrian Center in Jeddah is especially recommended, not just because of the club's size but also because of everything else that Jeddah, Saudi Arabia's commercial center and port city, has to offer. In late September, a cool breeze washes over the country, mak-

ing the evenings milder and perfect for strolls through Jeddah's historic district, a UNESCO World Heritage Site dating back to 657. Autumn in Jeddah also carries with it enough vestiges of summer for visitors to enjoy the city's Red Sea beaches and diving among colorful coral reefs.

But Saudi Arabia has its doors open to travelers year round following the tradition of *hafawah*, a millennia-old concept of Arab hospitality that grew from life in

a desert environment. Today, all sorts of modern comforts are available throughout the kingdom, but the ideas of *hafawah* live on and await all those who take the steps to discover the beauty of this crown jewel of the Middle East.

This content references excerpts from the Saudi Arabian government's official tourism website, Visit Saudi. For more information, please visit <https://www.visitsaudi.com/en>.



The King Abdullah Financial District in Riyadh is home to many commercial offices and retail spaces.

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The Arabian Desert is the fifth-largest in the world. GETTY IMAGES

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ON THE OCCASION OF
THE ANNIVERSARY OF
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