

**Landmarks in my Country**



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Although most tourism in Saudi Arabia still largely involves religious pilgrimages, there is growth in the leisure tourism sector. According to the World Bank, approximately 14.3 million people visited Saudi Arabia in 2012, making it the world’s 19th-most-visited country.[1] Potential tourist areas include the Hijaz and Sarawat Mountains, Red Sea diving and a number of ancient ruins.

In December 2013, Saudi Arabia announced its intention to begin issuing tourist visas for the first time in its history. Council of Ministers entrusted the Saudi Commission for Tourism and Antiquities with visa issuing on the basis of certain regulations approved by the Ministries of Interior and Foreign Affairs.

**World Heritage Sites**

Welterbe.svg UNESCO logo.svg Diriyah is a town in Saudi Arabia located on the northwestern outskirts of Riyadh. Diriyah was the original home of the Saudi royal family and served as the capital of the first Saudi dynasty from 1744 to 1818. Today, the town is the seat of the Diriyah Governorate, which also includes the villages of Uyayna, Jubayla, and Al-Ammariyyah, among others, and is part of Ar Riyad Province.

**Mada'in Saleh**

Mada'in Saleh is a pre-Islamic archaeological site located in the Al-Ula sector, within the Al Madinah Region of Saudi Arabia. A majority of the vestiges date from the Nabatean kingdom (1st century AD) The site constitutes the kingdom's southernmost and largest settlement after Petra, its capital. Traces of Lihyanite and Roman occupation before and after the Nabatean rule, respectively, can also be found in situ, while accounts from the Qur’an tell of an earlier settlement of the area by the tribe of Thamud in the 3rd millennium BC.

**Religious tourism**

Tourism in Saudi Arabia still largely involves religious pilgrimages. Mecca receives over three million pilgrims a year during the month of Dhu al-Hijjah in Hajj,[8] and around two million during the month of Ramadan in Umrah.[9] During the rest of the year, Mecca receives around four million for Umrah. The Hajj, or pilgrimage to the city, is one of the five pillars of Islam. However, non-Muslims are not allowed to enter.