

Kuwait

Country name	Kuwait
State title	State of Kuwait ¹
Name of citizen	Kuwaiti
Official language	Arabic (ara) ²
Country name in official language	الكويت = Al Kuwayt
State title in official language	دولة الكويت = Dawlat al Kuwayt
Script	Arabic script
Romanization System	BGN/PCGN Romanization System for Arabic ³
ISO-3166 code (alpha-2/alpha-3)	KW/KWT
Capital (Conventional name) ⁴	Kuwait City
Capital in official language	مدينة الكويت = Madīnat al Kuwayt

Introduction

Kuwait is a country in south-west Asia with a coastline on the Persian Gulf⁵ and land boundaries with Iraq and Saudi Arabia. It gained full independence from the United Kingdom in 1961. Its area is 17,800km², making it much smaller than its immediate neighbours. In size, it is comparable to Eswatini⁶ and Fiji. Kuwait consists largely of low-lying desert and the economy is heavily dependent on petroleum. As with some other small oil-rich Gulf states, the majority of the population are non-citizen expatriates⁷.

The country is named after its capital and largest city. Kuwait is essentially a city state, with the vast majority of the population living in Kuwait City and its suburbs. The word *kuwayt* is Arabic, meaning

¹ Kuwait is a constitutional monarchy ruled by an Emir (Arabic: *amīr*), so is an Emirate (*imārah*), but the official title uses the Arabic word *dawlah*, which means 'state'.

² ISO 639-2 codes are given for languages mentioned in this Factfile.

³https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/858000/ROMANIZATION_OF_ARABIC.pdf

⁴ On cartographic products PCGN would recommend showing the local Roman-script name in primary position with the English conventional name in brackets. In English-language texts the conventional name alone can be used or the name can be shown the same way as on cartographic products, if desired. It is sometimes useful to reference both names at the first mention of a place.

⁵ Although sometimes referred to as the Arabian Gulf, the long-standing English conventional name for this body of water is the Persian Gulf and this latter is the name recommended for use on UK government products. The Gulf may be used when it is clear from the context which feature is meant.

⁶ Formerly known as Swaziland.

⁷ The CIA World Factbook gives the demographic composition as: Kuwaiti 30.4%, other Arab 27.4%, Asian 40.3%, African 1%, other 9% (2018 estimate) <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ku.html>

'little fort'; the diminutive form of *kūt* 'fort'⁸. The spelling Koweit was sometimes used in English prior to World War 2.

Historically there was no clearly defined boundary in this part of the Arabian Peninsula; at the start of the 20th century the Ottoman Empire controlled what is now Iraq, and Britain controlled Kuwait as a protectorate. In December 1922 Britain and Ibn Saud signed the Uqair Protocol, which finalised Saudi Arabia's border with both Kuwait and Iraq. The Treaty also created a Saudi–Kuwaiti neutral zone in the south-east, where both parties were to share equal rights pending further agreement. When oil was later discovered in this zone it was agreed to partition it in 1965, this division being ratified in 1969-70, at which point the Kuwait-Saudi border was finalised at its current position⁹.

Geographical names policy

Geographical names in Kuwait are found written in Arabic, which is the country's official language. Where possible, Arabic-script names should be taken from official Kuwaiti sources and romanized according to the BGN/PCGN 1956 Romanization System for Arabic. It should be noted that Roman-script forms may be encountered which differ from those arising from the application of the BGN/PCGN System for Arabic. Some features have conventional English-language names which can be used in English-language text and should be shown in brackets after the romanized Arabic name on cartographic products. The national mapping agency in Kuwait is believed to be the Survey Department of Kuwait Municipality. An interactive map can be found at <http://gis1.baladia.gov.kw/>. The map is available in Arabic and English; although note that the Roman-script spellings on the English version do not conform to the BGN/PCGN Romanization System.

Language

The official language of Kuwait is Arabic, which is a Semitic language written from right-to-left in Arabic script. Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) is used for official written purposes. The spoken language is the Kuwaiti dialect of Arabic, a variant of Gulf Arabic¹⁰ (afb) (also spoken in eastern Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states such as Qatar and the United Arab Emirates) but with pronunciation and/or vocabulary influences from Iraqi Arabic, Persian, Turkish, English, some Indian languages and others¹¹. English is widely used in both government and education and is commonly spoken as a second language.

Kuwaiti Arabic is not so far removed from MSA as, for example, the Maghrebi Arabic dialects of North Africa. Below are listed some significant features of the dialect that may influence the pronunciation of Kuwaiti toponyms, and consequently the non-standard Roman-script spellings of these toponyms that might be encountered. These features are also found in some other Gulf Arabic dialects.

- The Arabic letter **ق** (*qāf*), which is romanized in the BGN/PCGN Romanization System for Arabic as 'q' (in MSA it is pronounced as a voiceless uvular plosive (IPA: /q/)), is pronounced in some Kuwaiti contexts as the 'g' in 'get' and may sometimes be seen spelt with 'g' rather than 'q' in Roman script. For example, BGN/PCGN romanizations Al Maqwa' and Ar Riqī' may be seen spelt Magwa and Rigai on Kuwaiti mapping or signs.
- The Arabic letter **ج** (*jīm*), which is romanized in the BGN/PCGN Romanization System for Arabic as 'j', and pronounced in MSA as the 'j' in 'jug' (IPA: /d͡ʒ/) is sometimes in Kuwait

⁸ <https://www.britannica.com/place/Kuwait>

⁹ <https://fall.fsulawrc.com/collection/LimitsinSeas/IBS103.pdf>

¹⁰ Known in Arabic as *Khalījī*.

¹¹ https://www.wikiwand.com/en/Kuwaiti_Arabic

pronounced as the ‘y’ in ‘may’. For example, the male personal name Mājid might be pronounced ‘Mayid’. This pronunciation trait is less often transferred to Roman-script spellings than is the abovementioned q-to-g change.

- The Arabic letters ظ (zāʾ) and ض (ḍād), romanized in the BGN/PCGN System as z and ḍ respectively may both be seen represented in non-standard Roman script as ‘d’, ‘dh’ or ‘z’. Compare BGN/PCGN romanization Az Zāhir with the Roman-script spelling Daher for the name of a district of Kuwait. Another example of this phenomenon in the Gulf region is the conventional name Abu Dhabi (BGN/PCGN: Abū Zāby).
- The definite article ال is romanized in the BGN/PCGN Romanization System for Arabic as ‘Al’ or assimilated if followed by one of the ‘sun’ letters, e.g. *Al Qamar, Ash Shams*. In Gulf Arabic pronunciation, the initial *alif*, ‘a’ sound is dropped. Nevertheless, the ‘a’ is usually retained in Kuwaiti Arabic- and Roman-script spellings. For example, the local pronunciation of the country name is *li-kweet*, however it is still usually seen romanized as Al Kuwait or Al Kuwait.¹²

Inventory of characters (and their Unicode encodings¹³):

The **BGN/PCGN Romanization System for Arabic** contains the following letter-diacritic combinations in addition to the unmodified letters of the basic Roman script¹⁴:

Romanization	Unicode encoding	Romanization	Unicode encoding
‘	2018 or 02BB	ī	012A
’	2019 or 02BC	î	012B
Á	00C1	ş	015E
á	00E1	ș	015F
Ā	0100	ı	0162
ā	0101	ı̇	0163
Ḍ	1E10	Ū	016A
ḍ	1E11	ū	016B
Ḥ	1E28	Ẓ	005A+0327*
ḥ	1E29	ẓ	007A+0327*

*Note, the z + cedilla is not available as a single encoding.

¹² For further details on the romanization of the definite article see the BGN/PCGN Romanization System for Arabic.

¹³ See www.unicode.org

¹⁴ Characters can be manually input into Microsoft Word documents by typing in these character codes and then holding down the ALT key and pressing /x/. The code will change to the required character. The letter can be copied and pasted into other programmes if required. Alternatively, the ‘Insert – Symbol’ command can be used; the code can be entered into the ‘Character code’ box which will show the corresponding letter.

A GeoNames Soft-Copy Keyboard can be downloaded from the NGA website and used to enter the required letter-diacritic combinations for a particular region: http://geonames.nga.mil/gns/html/gns_services.html.

Administrative structure

Kuwait is divided into six governorates (Arabic: *muḥāfazah/muḥāfazat*) at first-order administrative level (ADM1). The Kuwaiti governorates do not have administrative centres (PPLAs). Approximately two thirds of the population live in the four governorates that form Kuwait City and its suburbs. The remaining two governorates cover over 90% of the country’s area and contain approximately one third of the population. Governorates were first established in 1962 (when there were three) with the most recent division and arrangement dating from 1999. Five of the governorates fall under Baladīyat al Kuwayt (Kuwait Municipality)¹⁵, with the exception of Al Jahra’.

The built-up areas of the governorates are divided into 119 areas (or districts) (Arabic: *minṭaqah*; plural: *manāṭiq*), at second-order administrative level (ADM2). Many *manāṭiq* are the size of suburbs. The Arabic word for suburb, *ḍāḥiyat*, sometimes appears as part of the area name. The second-order administrative structure continues to be modified, with new districts being added as new urbanised areas are constructed.

The governorates (ADM1s) and areas (ADM2s) of Kuwait are listed below:

1. Al ‘Āṣimah (29° 20' 00" N, 047° 55' 00" E)¹⁶

Name in Arabic script	العاصمة
Long form name	Muḥāfazat al ‘Āṣimah
Long form name in Arabic script	محافظة العاصمة
ISO 3166-2 code	KW-KU
Variant Name(s)	Al Kuwayt; Capital
Centre	N/A
Website	https://www.baladia.gov.kw/sites/ar/Pages/main.aspx

Al ‘Āṣimah consists of 34 ADM2s¹⁷:

Jazīrat Umm an Namil, Shamāl Gharb aṣ Ṣulaybikhāt, Mīnā’ ad Dawḥah, Ad Dawḥah (Doha), Aṣ Ṣulaybikhāt, Gharnāṭah (Granada), Mīnā’ ash Shuwaykh, Ash Shuwaykh aṣ Ṣinā’iyah (Shuwaykh Industrial) 1, 2 & 3, Ash Shuwaykh at Ta’līmīyah (Shuwaykh Educational), Ash Shuwaykh aṣ Ṣiḥḥīyah (Shuwaykh Health), Mu’askarāt al Mubārakīyah, Ash Shuwaykh, As Surrah, Qurṭubah (Cordoba), Al Yarmūk (Yarmouk), Ar Rawḍah, Al ‘Adaylīyah, Al Khālidīyah, Ad Da’īyah, Al Qādisīyah, An Nuzhah, Al Fayḥā’, Kayfān, Banayd al Qār (Bneid al-Gar), Ad Dasmah, Al Maṣṣūrīyah, Ḍāḥiyat ‘Abd Allāh as Sālīm, Ash Shāmīyah, Dasmān, Ash Sharq, Qiblah (Jibla), Mirqāb.

¹⁵ <https://www.baladia.gov.kw/sites/ar/Pages/main.aspx>

¹⁶ Al ‘Āṣimah means ‘the Capital’. The governorate includes the island of Faylakā.

¹⁷ <https://www.baladia.gov.kw/sites/ar/BranchesSector1/Pages/capital/contactUs.aspx?menuItem=25&q1=demoMenu1>

2. Al Aḥmadī (28° 55' 00" N, 048° 00' 00" E)

Name in Arabic script	الأحمدي
Long form name	Muḥāfazat al Aḥmadī
Long form name in Arabic script	محافظة الأحمدية
ISO 3166-2 code	KW-AH
Variant Name(s)	Ahmadi
Centre	N/A
Website	https://www.baladia.gov.kw/sites/ar/Pages/main.aspx

Al Aḥmadī consists of 19 ADM2s¹⁸:

Al Finṭās, Al 'Uqaylah, Jābir al 'Alī, Az Zāhir (Daher), Al Maqwa' (Maqwa), Al Mahbūlah, Ar Riqqah, Hadīyah, Abū Ḥalīfah, Fahad al Aḥmad, Al Manqaf (Mangaf), Aṣ Ṣabāḥīyah, Al Faḥayḥīl, Janūb aṣ Ṣabāḥīyah, Madīnat al Aḥmadī, Shamāl ash Shu'aybah, Janūb ash Shu'aybah, Mīnā' 'Abd Allāh, Umm al Haymān.

3. Al Farwānīyah (29° 15' 00" N, 047° 55' 00" E)

Name in Arabic script	الفروانية
Long form name	Muḥāfazat al Farwānīyah
Long form name in Arabic script	محافظة الفروانية
ISO 3166-2 code	KW-FA
Variant Name(s)	Al Farwaniyyah
Centre	N/A
Website	https://www.baladia.gov.kw/sites/ar/Pages/main.aspx

Al Farwānīyah consists of 17 ADM2s¹⁹:

Al Andalus, Al Firdaws, Al 'Āriḍīyah, Ṣabāḥ an Nāṣir, Ar Riq'ī (Rigai), Ar Ray, Abraḡ Khayṭān, Khayṭān al Janūbī, Al 'Umarīyah, Al Farwānīyah, Ar Rābīyah, Ar Riḥāb (Rehab), Ishbīlīyah (Seville), Al 'Āriḍīyah Takhzīn wa Ist'amālāt Ḥukūmīyah (Government Storage and Uses), Jalīb ash Shuyūkh, aḡ Ḍajjī, Al Maṭār (Airport)

4. Al Jahrā' (29° 30' 00" N, 047° 30' 00" E)²⁰

Name in Arabic script	الجبراء
Long form name	Muḥāfazat al Jahrā'
Long form name in Arabic script	محافظة الجبراء
ISO 3166-2 code	KW-JA
Variant Name(s)	Al Jahrah; الجهرة
Centre	N/A
Website	http://jahra.gov.kw/

Al Jahrā' consists of 24 ADM2s²¹: Of the 24 *manāṭiq* in Muḥāfazat al Jahrā', 14 are within the built-up area of Al Jahrā' and 10 are outside the built-up area.

¹⁸<https://www.baladia.gov.kw/sites/ar/BranchesSector2/Pages/ahmadi/contactUs.aspx?menuItem=item25&g1=demoMenu1>

¹⁹<https://www.baladia.gov.kw/sites/ar/BranchesSector3/Pages/farwaniya/contactUs.aspx?menuItem=item25&g1=demoMenu1>

²⁰ Includes the islands of Būbiyān and Warbah as part of Maḥmīyah Ṣabāḥ al Aḥmad aṭ Ṭabī'iyah (Ṣabāḥ al Aḥmad Nature Reserve).

²¹<http://jahra.gov.kw/%D8%B9%D9%86-%D9%85%D8%AD%D8%A7%D9%81%D8%B8%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AC%D9%87%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%A1%D9%85%D8%AD%D8%A7%D9%81%D8%B8%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AC%D9%87%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%A1-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%B3%D8%B7%D9%88%D8%B1/> [accessed 27/10/2020]

- The urban *manāṭiq* of Al Jahra' include: Al Wāḥah, Al 'Ayūn, Al Qaṣr, Al Jahra' al Qadīmah (Old al Jahra), An Nasīm, Taymā', An Na'īm, Janūb al Jahra' (Al Jahra South, recently renamed Madīnat Sa'd al 'Abd Allāh) and Al Jahra' aṣ Ṣinā'iyah (Industrial al Jahra).
- The *manāṭiq* outside the urban area of Al Jahra' include: Kāzīmah, Ar Rawḍatayn, Umm al 'Aysh, As Sālimī, Kabd (Kabed), Aṣ Ṣulaybīyah, Aṣ Ṣulaybīyah aṣ Ṣinā'iyah (Industrial Aṣ Ṣulaybīyah), Aṣ Ṣulaybīyah az Zirā'iyah (Agricultural Aṣ Ṣulaybīyah) and Amgharah; the cities of Aṣ Ṣubīyah and al Muṭlā'; Maḥmīyah Ṣabāḥ al Aḥmad aṭ Ṭabī'iyah (Ṣabāḥ al Aḥmad Nature Reserve); and Al 'Abdalī [agricultural area].

5. Hawallī (29° 18' 00" N, 048° 03' 00" E)

Name in Arabic script	حولي
Long form name	Muḥāfazat Ḥawallī
Long form name in Arabic script	محافظة الحولي
ISO 3166-2 code	KW-HA
Variant Name(s)	Hawali; Hawally
Centre	N/A
Website	https://www.baladia.gov.kw/sites/ar/Pages/main.aspx

Ḥawallī consists of 14 ADM2s²²:

Ash Sha'b, Ḥawallī, Al Jābirīyah, As Sālimīyah, Ar Rumaythīyah, Salwá, Bayān, Mishrif (Mishref), Ḍāḥīyat Mubārak al 'Abd Allāh, As Salām, Aṣ Ṣadīq, Ḥiṭīn, Ash Shuhadā', Az Zahrā'

6. Mubārak al Kabīr (29° 13' 30" N, 048° 03' 00" E)

Name in Arabic script	مبارك الكبير
Long form name	Muḥāfazat Mubārak al Kabīr
Long form name in Arabic script	محافظة مبارك الكبير
ISO 3166-2 code	KW-MU
Variant Name(s)	Mubarak al-Kabeer
Centre	N/A
Website	https://www.baladia.gov.kw/sites/ar/Pages/main.aspx

Mubārak al Kabīr consists of 11 ADM2s²³:

Ṣabāḥ as Sālim, Al Masīlah, Al 'Adān, Al Fanayṭīs, Al Quṣūr, Al Qurayn, Ḍāḥīyat Abū Fuṭayrah, Mubārak al Kabīr, Al Wusṭá, Janūb al Wusṭá, Ṣabḥān

Other Significant Locations

PCGN Approved Name	Name in Arabic Script	Variant Names/Spellings	Location	Feature Type
Jazīrat Faylakā	جزيرة فيلكا	Faylakah; Jazirat Failaka; Faijlaka Island; Fulayka; al-Falakah	29° 26' 26" N, 048° 20' 05" E	Island
Jazīrat Būbiyān	جزيرة بوبيان	Bubyan; Būbīyān	29° 46' 11" N, 048° 15' 20" E	Island
Jazīrat Warbah	جزيرة وربة	Warba; Al Warbah; Ouarba	29° 59' 38" N, 048° 04' 00" E	Island

²² <http://ud.baladia.gov.kw/main-web/govs/hawally.htm>

²³ <https://www.baladia.gov.kw/sites/ar/BranchesSector1/Pages/mubarak/contactUs.aspx?menuItem=56&g1=demoMenu2>

PCGN Approved Name	Name in Arabic Script	Variant Names/Spellings	Location	Feature Type
Jazīrat Qārūh	جزيرة قاروه	Jezirat Karu, Jazīrat Kārū, Qarawah, Qārawh, Qārū, Qaruh Island	28° 49' 03" N, 048° 46' 35" E	Island
Jazīrat Umm al Marādīm	جزيرة ام المرادم	Umm Al-Maradem; Umm Al-Maradim	28° 40' 49" N, 048° 39' 06" E	Island
Jazīrat Kubbār	جزيرة كبار	Al Kubbar; Al Kuber; Al Kubr; Kuber; Kubar	29° 04' 20" N, 048° 29' 36" E	Island
Jūn al Kuwayt (Kuwait Bay)	جون الكويت	Khalīj al Kuwayt	29° 25' 55" N, 047° 55' 32" E	Bay
Jazīrat Miskān	جزيرة مسكان	Machiane; Jazīrat Mashjan; Mashjang; Mashjān Island; Mashyān; Maskān; Mischan	29° 29' 05" N, 048° 15' 05" E	Island
Jazīrat 'Awhah	جزيرة عوہة	Auha; Auhah	29° 22' 40" N, 048° 26' 21" E	Island
Mīnā' ash Shuwaykh (Shuwaikh Port)	ميناء الشويخ		29° 21' 09" N, 047° 55' 45" E	Port
Mīnā' ash Shu'aybah (Shuaiba Port)	ميناء الشعبية	Mīnā' ash Shu'aibah	29° 02' 41" N, 048° 09' 33" E	Port
Mīnā' ad Dawḥah (Doha Port)	ميناء الدوحة		29° 22' 52" N, 047° 47' 56" E	Port
Mīnā' az Zawr	ميناء الزور	Mīna Al-Zour, Zour, Az-Zour	28° 44' 00" N, 048° 23' 12" E	Oil pipeline terminal
Mīnā' al Aḥmadī	ميناء الاحمدي		29° 03' 50" N, 048° 08' 31" E	Oil pipeline terminal
Khawr 'Abd Allāh ²⁴	خور عبدالله	Khor Abdullah, Khawr Abd Allah	29° 52' 39" N, 048° 23' 00" E	Marine channel
Khawr Būbiyān	خور بوبيان	Khor Bubyān	29° 59' 43" N, 048° 09' 45" E	Marine channel
Khawr aṣ Ṣubīyah	خور الصبية	Khor Subiyah, Khawr aṣ Ṣabīyah, Khawr Sabiya, Khor Al-Subiyah	29° 38' 30" N, 048° 09' 02" E	Marine channel
Al Wafrāh	الوفرة	Wafra, al-Wafrāh	28° 38' 21" N, 047° 55' 50" E	Populated place
An Nuwayṣīb	النويصيب	Al-Nuweisib, Nuweiseeb	28° 32' 49" N, 048° 23' 57" E	Locality & border post
Al Khīrān	الخيران	El Kheeran	28° 39' 04" N, 048° 23' 25" E	Populated place

²⁴ This channel forms the boundary between Iraq and Kuwait.

Useful references

BBC Country Profile: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-14644252>
BGN/PCGN Romanization System for Arabic:
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/858000/ROMANIZATION_OF_ARABIC.pdf
CIA World Factbook: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ku.html>
Ethnologue: www.ethnologue.com (for information on languages)
International Organization for Standardization (ISO): www.iso.org
ISO Online Browsing Platform (OBP): <https://www.iso.org/obp/ui#home>
Kuwait Electronic Guide: <http://gis1.baladia.gov.kw/> (interactive map – in Arabic and English)
Kuwait Municipality: <https://www.baladia.gov.kw/sites/ar/Pages/main.aspx>
Kuwait News Agency (KUNA): <https://www.kuna.net.kw/Default.aspx>
Kuwait Ports Authority (KPA): <https://www.kpa.gov.kw/en/>
Kuwaiti Government Online: www.e.gov.kw
Omniglot: www.omniglot.com (for information on languages and scripts)
PCGN Country Names list: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/country-names>
Statoids: <http://www.statoids.com> (for information on administrative divisions)
Unicode: www.unicode.org
US Board on Geographic Names GEOnet Names Server: <http://earth-info.nga.mil/gns/html/index.html>
US Library of Congress Persian Gulf states: country studies: <https://www.loc.gov/item/93046476/>

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