

# Free saudi arabian way of life essay sample

[Sociology](#), [Women](#)



Saudi Arabia is a country in the heart of Middle East. It borders eight other countries and occupies nearly the entire Arabian Peninsula. Just like many of the other Middle East countries, Saudi Arabia is a cash-rich land thanks to the vast oil interests. This has led to the country being a home to sleek, modern cities and technological advances. It is not only in infrastructure that the country is rich in but also culturally it is rich too. Its culture has been shaped by its Islamic heritage, its Bedouin traditions, as well as its historical role as an ancient trade center. In spite of the tremendous development witnessed over the past years, Saudi society has been able to take their values, tradition, custom, hospitality, and even their dress codes and adopted them to the modern society. Saudi Arabia is celebrated for its unique way of life, through which it has been able to preserve its centuries-old heritage.

Culture can be defined as beliefs, practices, customs, and social behaviors of a particular nation or people. That said, it would be important to note that Saudi Arabia cultural setting is in accordance with Arabic and Islamic teachings. Many elements from historical rituals and folk culture such as dance and music has been featured. For instance, the most compelling folk ritual in Saudi Arabia is Al Ardha. It is the country's national dance and is performed using swords. The dance is based on Bedouin traditions. Sword-carrying men dance shoulder to shoulder while drummers beat out a rhythm and poets chants verses. In their dances, instruments are commonly used and mizmar is one of them. Mizmar is an oboe-like instrument that is used in a Mizmar dance and is commonly found in Mecca, Medina, and Jeddah. Drum like in many other cultures, is an important instrument in this cultural setup.

Saudi Arabia is a very religious country. It is an Islamic theocratic monarchy in which Islam is and has almost ever been the official religion. Their religious nature is demonstrated by holiday celebrations. In Saudi Arabia one of the major highlights is the holy month of Hajj (pilgrimage) and Ramadan. During the holy month of Ramadan families fast from dawn to dusk as is required by the law. The holy month culminates with the Eid-Al-Fitr holidays. Customary, presents and new clothes are bought for the children while friends and relatives are paid visits. They also celebrate Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son during the holy month of Hajj which culminates with the Eid-Al-Adha holiday.

Apart from Islamic traditions, Arabic traditions also plays an important role in a Saudi citizen's life. Though these age-old traditions have evolved over time, they are still highly regarded. They include hospitality and generosity shown to visitors, friends and relative by the host family. Coffee is the simplest of hospitality expression. While it is being served, sweets and dates are also included. Burning of incense is another gesture of welcoming visitors. Saudi culture has also been maintained through family values and customs. Family sanctity follows Islamic law. They have been able to maintain the social structure which is well organized into clans and tribes. Most of the extended families live together and nepotism is widely encouraged. Though giving gifts is widely upheld, a man cannot present flowers to a woman.

Saudi Arabian culture is very rich in literature. Very few countries around the world have cultural traditions as beloved and indigenous as is in Saudi Arabia. For example, some poetry dating back to pre-Islamic society have

been preserved as a national cultural treasure. Another form of artistic expression is through storytelling. This however, has to be in accordance with Islamic law, guidelines governing public performances. The performer is prohibited against making 'graven images' to represent anything. Hand lettered Qurans are safely kept and respected, as they are considered sacred. Food and drinks are part of their culture. Most of the food is spicy dishes that are made with rice, chicken, pita bread, lamb, lentils and grains. The food must be prepared as it used to be prepared centuries ago as stated by the Islamic law. Lunch just like anywhere else on earth is considered the day's main meal.

Dress code in Saudi Arabia is conservative for both men and women in accordance to the religion and custom. As for the foreigners, they have been afforded some leeway in dressing matters, but have to look decent particularly in public places. It is expected that foreign men should have on them long trousers and shirts covering their upper torso, while women should wear loose skirts with hemline below the knee. Teenagers are expected to be decent wherever they are as well. Bathing suits and shorts cannot be worn in public. Thobe is the traditional dress for men and should be worn by every man regardless of his work or social status. Wearing of thobe signifies equality according to Saudi culture and beliefs. White thobes are worn during the hot season and woolen thobes are worn during the cool weather. On special times mishlah or bisht (long cloak trimmed in gold) is worn over the thobe. Men also have headdresses which consist of a taiga (small white cap), gutra (large square of cloth), and igal (double black cord). As for the women, they are supposed to wear overflowing black cloaks called

an abayah, full face veil, and a scarf covering her hair. Women also wear fashionable clothes underneath the cloak.

Saudi's lifestyle is governed by the religious teachings and practices.

Anything that is deemed contrary to this teachings, is prohibited from being practiced whatsoever. As much as there is plenty of entertainment in the Saudi culture, anything outside of this, is unacceptable. For example, public theaters and cinemas are prohibited. This is because the Wahhabi law, think of this institutions as incompatible with Islam. However, there has been a reform of some sort in the country that has allowed some of the movies to be shown and theaters be opened. Theaters are available on private grounds but most are popular for local productions rather than the exhibition of motion pictures. As much as DVDs and other entertainment materials are available, entertainment is confined to one's personal house except on rare occasions.

The other aspect of their lifestyle is that some dishes/meals cannot be taken. For instance, one cannot have pork for religious reasons. It is thought to be unclean and thus not acceptable in their cultural setup. The same case with alcoholic drinks. They cannot be taken as they are thought to be against the Islamic law. When dishes are being prepared, they have to be prepared in accordance to the Islamic law. During the holy month of Ramadan nobody is allowed to drink, smoke or eat anything during the day. They also break five times a day for prayers and everybody whether Muslim or not everybody should observe this. Everybody Saudi citizen is Muslim and should abide by the laws that are in place.

The Saudi's are a very social society. Socializing is done in different places

depending on the occasion. For example, if the host does not really know you well, socializing will be in a restaurant. With time one gets to be invited to the home as the relationship blossoms. Men and women are not allowed to be seen together in public places unless you are close relatives. If in an occasion they happen to be together, they will be put in separate rooms. When visiting a home, it is crucial for one to remove their shoes and greet the elders present first. Punctuality is also appreciated although it is not crucial. During meals there are little conversations and one is expected to sit cross-legged or kneel on one knee if the food is on the floor.

Though the culture and the lifestyle is appealing, there are a lot of controversies from that part of the world. Firstly, human rights violation is very common. People have been executed for various reasons. For example, if you are found practicing anything contrary to the Islamic law this warrants a death sentence. Criticizing the Royal family is also a mistake that can cost you your life. Despite the call for respect for one's life the government have been reported to have executed a lot of people. Close to two hundred people have been executed since the year 2008. Again, despite the laws clearly prohibiting torture, it is still widely practiced. This is evident as reports have it that numerous people have died while in custody due to torture. Human right activists have also been on the receiving end of human right violation. Some have been arrested and detained without trial even though again the law is against this.

The other controversy is the media censorship. In spite of all its technological advancements, Saudi Arabia ranks among the last in terms of media freedom. According to Freedom House, which is an advocacy group Saudi

Arabia has the most censored media all over the world. The content to be broadcasted in any of the media tools, has to be approved by the government. The editor-in-chief of all the privately owned newspapers is a government employee. The government here has some of the strictest internet practices around the world. Anything that is thought to be criticizing the decision of the royal family and/or religious leaders cannot be aired. This has led to locals looking for some other sources of information or uncensored entertainment.

Its conservative and backward laws towards women is astonishing. Women in this part of the world have a lot that they cannot do. It is only recently that they were allowed to vote by King Abdullah. They will therefore be in a position to vote and run for political office in 2015 election. The gender disparity is evident through the fact that only seventeen percentage of women comprise of the total work force in Saudi Arabia. It is also known as the only country at this time and age to legally ban women from driving. This however is expected to change with time.

It is not rocket science understanding that no place is perfect. Some things come naturally with time. All said and done, Saudi Arabia has a rich culture that one should endeavor to know more about. Its rich culture was enhanced by the fact that a lot of trade took place here many years ago. Not only is their literature through folk tales, dances, and poetry it has recently been put down in writing by some of the most renowned sons of this land as novels. The hospitality of the Saudi people is so encourage and catchy and makes them a very special lot. Saudi Arabia may not be everybody's cup of tea but is a good place nevertheless.