



KUWAIT: People walk in the traditional Souq Mubarakiya.

By Ben Garcia

Kuwait is a rich country and the cost of living here is undoubtedly high. But did you know that there are many places and things in Kuwait that you can enjoy on a budget? Sometimes all you need to worry about is food or transportation - if you are not driving!

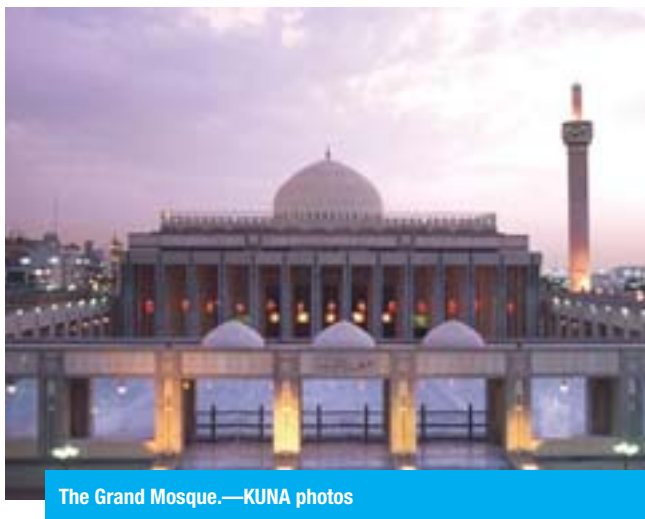
Remember to make a plan before embarking on a journey around Kuwait, so as to stay on budget. Taxi drivers sometimes charge ridiculously high fares, but you can get the right price if you negotiate. The taxis that are negotiable in price are the beige and white roaming taxis. Call taxis traditionally charge higher fares compared to roaming cabs. Buses are cheaper compared to taxis, but it can take ages to reach your destination, as they have limited frequencies. Moreover, most places to visits are not on bus routes.

Mubarakiya - children's playground and grilled fish

If you are roaming around Kuwait City, this place is enchanting. Start from the traditional Souq Mubarakiya, where you can enjoy shopping and experience the traditional atmosphere and architecture. In fact, one full day is not enough to roam around Mubarakiya Market. Children can play in the playground outside the fruit and vegetable section of the market.

Some people love to see traditional shops selling traditional stuff. On one side of Mubarakiya are shops selling expensive perfumes, but you can buy them inside the souq for a cheaper price. There are shops that sell abayas and various other clothes and fabrics. The Gold souq is also located in Mubarakiya, including a market for precious stones and metals.

The ground level and basement sections of Mubarakiya have shops selling spices and herbal products, household items, blankets, carpets, ready-to-wear clothing, dates and fresh fruits and vegetables, meat and fish. Restaurants and cafes are plentiful too, and prices are reasonable. Stuff your tummy with delicious grilled fish and shrimp, plus



The Grand Mosque.—KUNA photos

a selection of Arabic, Indian and Iranian cuisine. A budget of KD 5 or even KD 2 is enough for a meal.

National Museum, National Library and Grand Mosque

Near Souq Mubarakiya are museums, libraries and the Grand Mosque. You can visit them at no cost, but you need to read about them beforehand as there are no guides available. Artifacts are labeled and explained in both English and Arabic. The National Museum has various sections, including a diorama of life in Kuwait before the discovery of oil. The National Library is a huge building that requires time to explore. You can visit the place and read books inside the spacious and computerized library, but people are not allowed to borrow books from the library and take them out. The four storeys of the building are filled to capacity with thousands of books of various subjects and topics.

The nearby Grand Mosque can be visited for free too. Stroll a bit farther and you'll enjoy the skyline of Sharq, including iconic buildings such as the Kuwait Stock Market (Boursa Kuwait), Central Bank, Al-Babtain Library, Al-Hamra Tower, the under-construction NBK headquarters and others.

Al-Shaheed Park

Located in Sharq, Shaheed Park was inaugurated by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on March 2015. It is a beautiful oasis frequented by families. This beautiful garden narrates the story of a land, its history and culture featuring greenery and botanical gardens that promote environment awareness and protection. It has two museums - Thekra and Habitat - which you can tour with a headset that explains every section. Shaheed Park has a visitor center, a lake, walkways and jogging tracks, making it the largest urban park in Kuwait.

By visiting the Habitat - a museum dedicated to the environment and bird migration in Kuwait, visitors can learn about different ecosystems, migratory birds and the effects of pollution through interactive learning stations. An aviary outside the Habitat provides a resting area for numerous migratory birds in Kuwait, and for visitors to see the birds of Kuwait. The Martyr's Monument lists the names and images of people who died during the Iraqi invasion for young people to remember Kuwait's past. The park also takes pride in its auditorium, where educational lectures and seminars about culture and science are held. This place too is free of charge to enter.

Kuwait Towers

A five minutes' drive from Al-Shaheed Park are the majestic and iconic towers of Kuwait. The view from afar is a testament of pride and bravery for many Kuwaitis. The three towers have been tested by time, and stood witness to Saddam Hussein's aggression during the 1990-1991 Gulf War. If you don't want to pay for entry to the viewing sphere, selfies will do. The view from the corniche is delightful too.

Fahaheel, Egaila malls and Kuwait Magic

If you're done strolling around Souq Mubarakiya, head south to Fahaheel. There are fewer places to visit there, but along the way by Road 40 or 30, you will be treated with some desert views and many

10 things to do on tight budget



Al-Shaheed Park

malls. A few kilometers before reaching Fahaheel, Egaila is a large area with more than 10 malls side by side. One full day to visit the malls will not be enough.

Apart from the Kout and Yaal malls, there is a traditional bazaar in the heart of Fahaheel, where you can bargain for a selection of products. There are authentic Kuwaiti products too, from fruit baskets to cooking pots to carpets. If you like visiting fish markets, you can observe the early morning auction at the fish market near Kout Mall.

Relatively close by in Abu Halifa is an entertainment and amusement complex called Kuwait Magic. It has a diverse selection of retail shops, restaurants and children's games, fun rides and entertainment. Kuwait Magic was a popular destination for many children in Kuwait before The Avenues and the likes were built. The charges are minimal for the games and rides. The seaside area is also very pleasing and relaxing. You can jog or walk along the corniche and enjoy the weather or a coffee from one of the cafes.

Wafra

If you are fond of the countryside, try Wafra. It's a far-flung area, but you will love the sight of camels grazing in the desert. You can see some farm workers displaying fresh produce by the roadside, which they sell at cheap prices. Some Wafra farmers even give their harvest to visitors for free. Arabic and Indian food can be easily found at nearby restaurants, while popular fast food chains also have branches on the highway to Wafra.

Low budget places to visit and things to do in Kuwait are plenty. Kuwait is not as expensive as some perceive it to be.