

AUTHOR TRAVEL AGENCY

GO TO STAR

SAUDI ARABIA

2023



About travel

Go to Star author travel agency invites you to Saudi Arabia.

Saudi Arabia is an amazing example of how progress is displacing conservative frameworks and transforming a once closed monarchical country into a trendy, modern region. It is the richest and most actively developing eastern country, where many have dreamed of visiting, but tourist visas were only recently issued in 2019. And now, if you start exploring the Middle East, Saudi Arabia is definitely at the top of the list.

Installations by European artists, embedded in desert landscapes, at the Desert X Biennale, concerts by world stars in a huge mirrored concert hall in the middle of the

sands, restaurants with guest chefs where the interiors are fantastic rocks with thousand-year-old drawings, light shows in the city of the dead — all these are experiences that are not available in any other country in the world. Saudi Arabia, unlike the Emirates, boasts a rich history, many architectural monuments and a legacy of ancient civilizations — and now these treasures are open to us.





Day 1

Arrival in Al Ulu — a unique region with ancient architectural monuments and fantastic nature. Drive to Hegra, an open-air museum with rock tombs (UNESCO World Heritage Site). Picnic at sunset at Elephant Rock. Dinner in the picturesque desert with Al Garameel rocks under the starry sky. Accommodation at Habitas AlUla (5*).



Day 4

Riding the longest and fastest zipline in Saudi Arabia — 1.5 km at speeds up to 120 km/h overlooking the Al Ula Mountains. Organic picnic lunch in the fresh air, overlooking the cliffs and sand dunes. Dinner on the roof of "Maraya ", the largest mirror building in the world: the restaurant traditional cuisine of the Maraya Social region opened by chef Jason Atherton, winner of three Michelin stars.



Day 2

Buggy Race: An unforgettable ride through the beautiful sandstone mountains of Al-Ula in a guided buggy. Dinner at Tama at Habitas, a nature restaurant: here on open verandas with authentic design you can taste dishes made of the freshest products from local farms with the very spices that were once transported along the Incense Trail. Photoshoot at sunset amidst the cliffs.



Day 5

Return home.



Day 3

Horse-drawn carriage rides (like the ancient Nabateans) along the Hegra. Lunch at Suhail restaurant in the old town. Drive to Dadan, even more ancient than Hegra, the capital of the kingdoms of Dadan and Lihian. Discussion about archaeological findings with Dr. Hussein Bassir. Dinner at Circolo, a restaurant of Italian cuisine where pizzas are made in a wood-fired oven from local products, one of the hits — "Margarita" with buffalo milk cheese.



Al Ula

Saudi Arabia is the jewel of the Middle East, and Al-Ula is the jewel of Saudi Arabia. It is a unique historical region, outwardly reminiscent of Arizona and comparable in size to Belgium. Among the rugged desert canyons and whimsically shaped mountain peaks lie ancient tombs, the heritage of the Nabataean kingdom. The city of Al-Ula was founded in the 6th century BC as an oasis in the desert, with fertile soil and water, and it was through this city that the trade route of incense passed, through which spices and silks were transported between Asia, Africa and the Middle East.

Al-Ula opened to the public in 2018, but the old town, founded in the 12th century, has remained preserved, with the last inhabitants leaving in the 1980s. Time and erosion have not spared the house, and in a couple of decades there may be nothing left of it — another reason not to put off visiting the region.



Hegra

Like Petra in Jordan, the first association is with Hegra. And not without reason: both architecture is the work of the Nabateans. The ancient necropolis whose middle name is Madain Salih stretches for hundreds of kilometers in the desert among rocks of sandstone. You cannot get around it on foot: you have to take a car or a bus.

The main attraction of this open-air museum — the tombs, which are about 2 thousand years old. To build them, the ancient Nabateans bought rocks and then hired workers who turned the sandstone into architectural masterpieces with ornaments and inscriptions. In a few years, more than 20,000 architectural finds have been found here — and the excavations continue. This amazing region is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Hegra is a true wonder of the world and well worth a once-in-a-lifetime visit. At night the tombs are illuminated and this combined with the star-spangled sky looks spectacular.





Qasr al-Farid

Qasr al-Farid, or the Lonely Castle, is the largest tomb in all of Hegre that was never completed. A façade with a door and four columns has been carved into the huge rock the size of a four-story house, and the inscription that mentions Lihyan, son of Qusa, does nothing to solve the archaeological mystery. Qasr al-Farid was the first site in Saudi Arabia to be inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List.

We are left to marvel at the beauty and grandeur of this freestanding tomb, which seems like the setting for the movie *The Fifth Element*. After the sun goes down, the rock is illuminated and looks incredibly spectacular.







Dadan

The most ancient monument of the region of Al Ula is Dadan, or Dedan, the capital of the two kingdoms, mentioned three times in the Bible. This stone-cut city was founded in the 9th century BC as the capital of a kingdom with the same name, and from the 5th to the 2nd century BC belonged to the kingdom of Lichyan. In the 1st millennium BC, it was considered the most developed city in northern Arabia.

During archaeological excavations in Dadan, one finds sculptures depicting people from most likely higher social classes. But the main exhibit here is the dozens or more tombs carved into the redstone cliffs by hand, without any construction equipment. These are elaborate funerary monuments, the most famous of which are the "lion tombs," with sculptures of seated predators symbolizing power and protection.





Maraya

How to create a concert hall in the middle of the desert so that the building does not contrast with nature and does not look alien? Italian architects from the Gio Forma studio found a solution and created the largest mirror building in the world in the Al-Ula Desert, which made it into the Guinness Book of Records. A huge mirrored cube with giant mirror leaves reflects the mountains and sands around and becomes an extension of them. Designer Florian Bozhe explains that this art object makes you think about the connection between cultural heritage and nature.

Inside the Maraya Concert Hall (translated from Arabic as "mirror") is a spacious hall with a seating capacity of 500. Regular concerts are held here, including world stars. Andrea Bocelli has repeatedly performed, and at music festivals you can hear the Gipsy Kings, Enrique Iglesias, Lionel Richie, the Egyptian composer and pianist Omar Khairat.





Journey cost

6500 USD per person double occupancy

The price includes:

- accommodation according to the program;
- transportation according to the program;
- meals (lunches and dinners);
- sightseeing program and activities;
- professional certified guide (Hussein Basir - Egyptian archaeologist studying the pyramids of Giza).

Additional expenses:

- international flight;
- domestic flights;
- any change of program involving expenses;
- tips for the guide team.



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