

Yemen - Travel Facts and Figures

Location: Middle East

Bordering the Arabian Sea, Gulf of Aden, and Red Sea, between Oman and Saudi Arabia

Government type: republic

National emblem:

National flag:

Geographic coordinates: 15 00 N, 48 00 E

Area: 527,970 sq km

Highest point: Jabal an Nabi Shu'ayb 3,760 m

Population: 23,822,783 (est.)

Population density: 42 / sq km

Capital: Sana'a

geographic coordinates: 15°21'N 44°12'E elevation: 2,200 m (7,218 ft)

population: 1,747,627

Local time: GMT + 3 hours

Life expectancy: 63 years

GDP – per capita: \$ 2,400

Visa: Passport must be valid for at least six months after date of departure. Visa required by all nationals unless transit passengers continuing their journey by the same or first connecting aircraft within 168 hours, provided holding valid onward or return documentation and not leaving the airport.

Please note: The government of the Republic of Yemen refuses entry and transit facilities to holders of Israeli passports,

or holders of passports containing visas valid or expired for Israel or any indication, such as entry or exit stamps, that the holder has visited Israel.

Safety: Avoid the far north of the country towards Saudi Arabia, where tribesmen occasionally kidnap travellers to pressurise the government in disputes or demand a hefty ransom. The tourists are usually treated well, but not always. Check with government advisories regarding Islamic fundamentalist problems.

Currency: Yemeni Riyal (YER) = 100 fils. Notes are in denominations of YER1,000, 500, 200, 100, 50 and 20. Coins are in denominations of YER10, 5 and 1.

Language: Arabic is the official language, but English is widely spoken.

Duty free allowances: 600 cigarettes or 60 cigars or 450g of tobacco
two bottles of alcoholic beverages (non-Muslims only);
one bottle of perfume or eau de toilette; gifts up to a value of YER100,000
gold ornaments (women only) weighing up to 350g.

Climate: The climate in Yemen is mostly desert; hot and humid along west coast; temperate in western mountains affected by seasonal monsoon; extraordinarily hot, dry, harsh desert in east.

Clothing: Lightweight summer clothing in cottons or blends is ideal for most of the year. Sweaters, a light jacket or a shawl may be needed for the cooler evenings.

Religion: Islam is the official religion; other religions are also respected.

Ramadan: Ramadan is the holy month of fasting when Muslims abstain from eating, drinking and smoking during daylight hours. As a sign of respect, visitors are also required to refrain from these activities in public between sunrise and sunset.

Public holidays in 2009

- 1 Jan New Year's Day.
- 9 Mar Mouloud (Birth of the Prophet).
- 1 May Labour Day.
- 22 May National Unity Day.
- 26 Sep Revolution Day.
- 21 Sep Eid al-Fitr (End of Ramadan).
- 14 Oct National Day.
- 30 Nov Independence Day.
- 28 Nov Eid al-Adha (Feast of the Sacrifice).
- 18 Dec Muharram (Islamic New Year).

Friday is the general day of worship and a public holiday.

Weekend: Friday and Saturday will be the official Yemeni weekend.

Electricity: The electrical system is based on 220 and 230 volts / 50 Hz.

Alcohol: Yemen is a traditional Islamic country, therefore alcohol is prohibited. Visitors should respect this ethic value.

Drugs: Khat (qat) contains the alkaloid called cathinone, an amphetamine-like stimulant which is said to cause excitement, loss of appetite and euphoria. In 1980 the World Health Organization classified khat as a drug of abuse that can produce mild to moderate psychological dependence. The plant has been targeted by anti-drug organizations like the DEA. Traditionally, khat has been used as a socializing drug, and this is still very much the case in Yemen where khat-chewing is predominantly, although not exclusively, a male habit.

Credit cards: Major cards are accepted in most tourist area hotels, restaurants and major stores. They are not as widely accepted in rural areas of Yemen.

Business hours: The weekend has traditionally been Thursday afternoon and Friday.

Government Offices Saturday to Wednesday 8am – 3pm

Business Saturday to Wednesday 8am - 12am and 4pm – 7pm, Thursday 8am – 1pm

Banks Saturday to Wednesday 8am - 12am, Thursday 8am - 11:30am

Shops Sunday to Thursday 8am – 1pm and 4pm – 9pm

Health: Health care facilities are relatively poor in Yemen, especially outside major cities. The major hospitals in Sana'a are: Al Jumhuriyya, Al Kuwait and Al Thawra. In Aden, there is the Al Jumhuriyya, the Saudi Hospital and the Refinery Hospital. Most large cities have a general hospital. Medical insurance is essential.

Hotels: Accommodation in Yemen varies from ancient palace hotels and modern luxury hotels to funduks and tribal huts. It is necessary to book in advance and to receive a written confirmation. Standards range from basic to 5-star. Outside the main centres, facilities are limited.

Social conventions: Yemen is an Islamic country that observes all of the religion's strictest beliefs and this is extremely evident in everyday Yemeni culture. Holiday makers should be aware of this and tailor their behaviour accordingly. All visitors should exercise modesty with their clothing especially when visiting religious sites and generally speaking, long sleeves and trousers are considered more appropriate than the shorter alternatives. Non-Muslims are in fact not permitted to enter mosques so most tourists must make do with external views only. Yemeni people traditionally greet one another with a handshake and visitors may do the same when meeting locals; make sure to use the right hand only for this act and when receiving or offering food or drink also. If invited to the house of a local for dinner, then it's polite to bring a small gift as a token of your appreciation. An item from home that would be unavailable in Yemen would be ideal.

Photography: Visitors should avoid taking photographs of military constructions, women and police officers.

Mobile telephony: Roaming agreements exist with most international mobile phone operators. Coverage is good in the west and in coastal areas of the east.

Traffic system: Driving in Yemen is on the right-hand side.

Taxis: Recognisable by yellow licence plates. Taxi-sharing is the cheapest transport between cities. There are minimum charges within main cities but fares should be negotiated beforehand for intercity journeys.

Getting around: Road conditions and driving standards are quite poor and many roads are in a state of disrepair, with mountain roads particularly hazardous. Within Sana'a and from Ta'izz to Mokha, the roads are reliable. From Aden to Ta'izz is three to five hours' driving time. A road links Aden and Sana'a, otherwise the road network is mainly limited to desert tracks. Use of 4-wheel drive vehicles and a guide is recommended. There is a road from Aden to Mukalla of 500km (310 miles). Officially, traffic drives on the right but sometimes drivers travel on the left.

Getting there: The national airline is Yemen Airways (IY) (Yemenia)

Airport: Sanaa International Airport (SAH) is 13km north of the city. (al Rahaba Airport)

Internet country code: .ye

Telephone dialing code: + 967