



BRISTOL BEYOND BORDERS

The United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia



Saudi Arabia and the UAE have become increasingly popular destinations for relocations and assignments. In this overview, we will review each location, highlighting relocation trends and challenges.

For insights into the relocation trends and challenges in these locations, Bristol spoke with our long-term partner EER Middle East, one of the region’s leading providers of relocation and immigration services. They have provided additional details about the dynamic marketplaces of the UAE and Saudi Arabia and important points to note for mobility practitioners and relocating employees.

An Overview

The UAE

The UAE has long been considered one of the top choices for accessing the Middle East region and other key emerging markets. It is also well known as a nation that champions innovation, inclusivity, and possibility. The ambitious and adaptable approach of its government stood out when handling the global pandemic of 2020; the UAE provided swift support and sophisticated action plans that saw it become one of the first countries in the world to be able to welcome in visitors again. It is a nation that understands the importance of international engagement, focusing on talent, investment, and entrepreneurship.

Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia has become one of the world’s most talked about destinations in terms of investment and growth in recent years. Its ambitious Vision 2030 initiative has seen numerous megaprojects in key sectors such as tourism, leisure, hospitality, culture, sustainability, energy, and housing. The vibrancy of its major cities, youthful population, and thriving business environment have ensured its swift ascension up the global rankings of “places to watch.” Spearheaded by its government, the country’s transformation and economic diversification has drastically increased the number of individuals who want to relocate to Saudi and enjoy salary increases of around 25%. It has also caused many multinationals to inquire about opening a new Saudi office or relocating their regional headquarters into the Kingdom to secure lucrative government contracts. Some of the most in-demand sectors include construction, infrastructure, hospitality, and technology.

Factors Driving Relocation Demand

Diverse Residency Options: Both the UAE and Saudi Arabia governments have continued to evolve their immigration procedures/requirements in order to attract and retain foreign investment, innovative businesses, and talented professionals. In the UAE, residency options now include a Golden Visa for investors, real estate owners, and entrepreneurs, which are valid for ten years and allow the visa holder to sponsor their family. Saudi Arabia has instituted a broad range of licensing options for those who want to start a business, open an office, or partner with a Saudi company, many of which come with additional benefits, including priority access to government contracts.

Government Incentives: To further expand the appeal to foreign investors, businesses, and entrepreneurs, both countries offer a range of supportive and encouraging

incentives. These benefits can be extremely valuable and include aspects such as low tax requirements, complete company ownership, and long-term contractual arrangements.

Quality of Lifestyle: The UAE and Saudi Arabia offer year-round sunshine, beachside living spaces, and endless activities to suit every season — including desert dune bashing, mountain hiking, skydiving, and boat trips. The lifestyle in both locations can also be highly appealing thanks to relatively low cost of living, enabling new residents to live luxuriously with beautiful homes, great schools, and plenty of disposable income for extra things. Both are also well known for their impeccable safety records, which is proving very popular with families who want the right environment for their children.

Relocation Challenges

An Unfamiliar Culture: For many relocating expats, the culture of the UAE and Saudi Arabia could be significantly different than what they are used to. While Saudi Arabia is still more conservative than the UAE, both are proud Muslim nations that expect visitors and residents to exhibit certain levels of respect for their customs and traditions. An up-to-date guide to what to expect, with handy “dos and don’ts” can be essential to ensuring assignees settle in effectively and avoid causing any offense.

Fast-paced Housing: The housing markets of the UAE and Saudi Arabia move incredible quickly. As more and more expats take up residence, the competition for housing grows stronger, especially luxury villas and apartments. There are lots of upcoming developments in a variety of locations, but the rental market is still under immense pressure, so when a desirable property is identified, quick movement is required to secure it.





Local Expertise

Having access to experienced and knowledgeable resources on the ground in any destination is critical to relocation success. Destination services providers such as EER Middle East have a comprehensive understanding of the nuances of each location and the necessary steps for a seamless mobility experience. They are able to provide stress-free, tailored support to clients, assignees, and their families from all over the world. They can help them get settled in quickly with home searches, orientation tours, school registrations, and cultural training.

The Future

According to EER Middle East co-owners Marie O’Neill and Aideen Hopkins, the opportunities presented by the UAE and Saudi Arabia are almost limitless. Currently, they see a steady uptick in inquiries from entrepreneurs, professionals, regional leaders, and business owners who want to take advantage of what these countries and the wider Middle East market has to offer. Given the enviable lifestyle these countries offer along with the efforts to attract business by their respective governments, it is no wonder this upward trend shows no signs of slowing.

Thank you to co-owners
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EER

MIDDLE EAST

RELOCATION IMMIGRATION
CORPORATE SERVICES



Marie O’Neill
Co-Owner and
Managing Director



Aideen Hopkins
Co-Owner and
Operations Director

Questions or comments? Please connect with us at info@bristolglobal.com.

