**Practical Guide for Fulbright Scholars and Students**  
Affiliated with the American University of Kuwait

**Visiting Scholars**

**Application Process**

- U.S. Fulbright Scholar applicants should contact the Gulf Studies Center well in advance of the fall application deadline, preferably during the preceding spring semester. The Center will provide applicants with information regarding Fulbright affiliation at AUK and forward the applicants’ materials to the appropriate division head (Business, Humanities, Sciences and Social Sciences).

- If the division head deems the applicants’ candidacies beneficial to the division’s work, and has determined faculty members within their division to work with the applicants, Center staff will forward the affiliation request to the President’s Office for further review. If the applicant’s proposal and general qualifications are deemed a good match for AUK’s programs and institutional needs, she/he will receive an official letter of invitation from the President’s Office to submit as part of the Fulbright application materials.

- Subsequent communication with the Scholar regarding the application process and, if awarded a grant, logistical concerns for in-country arrival, will be managed by the Gulf Studies Center.

**Applicant disciplines**

- AUK and the Gulf Studies Center welcome applications in all fields, with a strong preference for the social sciences: political science, history, Middle East area studies (particularly Gulf studies), sociology, anthropology, and psychology.

**Visas to Kuwait**

- AUK cannot process a residency visa for visiting scholars unless they will be staying for at least one year (12 months) or more. In this case, the scholar should provide AUK (the Visa and Residency Office in Human Resources) with the following documents at least one month prior to their arrival: attested degrees and attested marriage certificate, if applicable.

- Scholars staying less than 12 months in Kuwait should plan on purchasing a 3-month visitor’s visa upon arrival at Kuwait International Airport (3 KD). This also applies for any dependents. AUK will aid scholars and their dependents with subsequent visa extensions throughout their
stay in Kuwait. Scholars must keep the Human Resources department informed of their travel plans during the grant period in order to facilitate the extension process.

- Accompanying dependants with nationalities other than those granted a 3-month visitors’ visa at the airport will require help from the Visa and Residency Office in Human Resources to secure their visitors’ visas. The Visa Office must be informed of the expected arrival date at least two weeks prior to ensure adequate time to initiate the visa process.

**Accommodation**

- AUK does not have on-campus housing nor does it provide off-campus housing for faculty. The University can offer visiting scholars discounted rates at several “apartment hotels” within walking distance of the campus. There are also furnished and unfurnished apartments located in the Salmiya area close to AUK. Scholars will be responsible for paying apartment rental costs with their Fulbright stipends.

**Accompanying dependants**

- Residency visas for dependents (for stays of one year or longer):
  - Husbands with valid residency in Kuwait can sponsor their wives and children.
  - Wives with valid residency in Kuwait cannot sponsor their husbands, but they can sponsor their children if the father is not a resident of Kuwait. To enroll children in any school they must have a valid residency and a civil ID (*of their own*).

- Employment opportunities for dependent spouses:
  - Kuwaiti law states that only persons with valid residency can officially work in Kuwait. The employer should provide a working residency for their employees.

- Volunteer opportunities:
  - Spouses are welcome to volunteer for on-campus events and programs according to their expertise and interest

- School enrollment for minor children:
  - AUK does not have any official agreement(s) with local schools. Scholars must enroll their children independently.
  - The American School of Kuwait has been the most understanding school regarding enrolled children without valid residency, with the condition that they will obtain residency in Kuwait. More information can be found on their website at the following
address: http://www.ask.edu.kw/. The School’s Admissions Officer may be contacted at: bilan@ask.edu.kw.

Undergraduate Teaching Activities (for Lecturing and Lecturing/Research Grantees)

- Scholars are invited to choose at least two of the following activities:
  - Teaching regular courses from a comparative perspective
  - Teaching or serving as a resource person in interdisciplinary courses or professional programs that focus on international issues
  - Participating in special seminars or colloquia that would benefit from the Scholar’s expertise
  - Assisting in developing new courses or programs
  - Assisting in upgrading existing course materials.

Campus and Community Activities

- Serving as a resource person for faculty and students
- Participating in campus and community life
- Speaking with civic organizations

Services provided to Scholars

- Visiting Faculty ID
- Library Services
- Office space on the AUK campus
- Normal support services (e.g. computer, copying and printing)

Visas and Residency

Fulbrighters should plan on obtaining a three month visit visa upon arrival at the Kuwait airport. This is a simple process: when exiting the plane, look for signs indicating the visa counter on the same floor as your arrival gate (do not go down the stairs to baggage claim). Take a number from the machine and wait for your number to flash on the screen. Approach the visa officer and give him your passport and 3 Kuwaiti dinars (approximately $10). They will also accept other currencies such as US dollars, Euros, and other Gulf currencies. He will probably ask for your address in Kuwait; provide either the address of your hotel, apartment, or friend’s home. They will stamp your passport, photocopy it, and then type up
your visit visa (a piece of paper). You will be asked to go to an adjacent counter to collect your passport and visa. Save the visit visa, as you will need it to eventually exit the country.

The American University of Kuwait does not provide Fulbright students or scholars with residency visas, as the relatively short time period of the Fulbright grant (either one semester or 10 months) does not warrant the trouble and expense of undergoing the residency process. The visit visa allows you to remain in Kuwait for three months. Upon the expiration of your visa, you must exit the country and return on a new visit visa (this can be done multiple times). It is very easy to leave and come back on the same day; Jazeera Airways (www.jazeeraairways.com) and Wataniya Airways (http://www.wataniyaairways.com) are a low-budget air carrier that flies to neighboring Gulf countries such as Bahrain, the UAE and Oman at a lesser price than traditional airlines.

**Housing**

There are several housing options for Fulbrighters in Kuwait. The American University of Kuwait is located in a suburb of Kuwait City called Salmiya, one of the most popular areas for Western expats to rent apartments—hence an abundance of furnished and unfurnished apartments. Other suburbs favored by expats (and in relatively close proximity to AUK) are: Salwa, Maidan Hawalli, Hawalli and Sha’ab.

Depending on the length of your stay, you may choose to rent an unfurnished apartment and furnish it yourself, or rent a furnished apartment. Here is some more guidance on the difference between furnished and unfurnished apartments.

**Unfurnished:**

Rent for unfurnished apartments tends to be far less than for furnished apartments, sometimes even 200 KD ($700) less a month. The difference in price will allow you to save money and also put the difference towards purchasing furniture. It is important to note, however, that “unfurnished apartment” in Kuwait means that absolutely NOTHING is provided—you will have to purchase every item for your home, including all appliances (washer, dryer and microwave if desired), cookware, bed, couch, etc. There is an IKEA in Kuwait that sells attractive, modern furniture at relatively low prices, and many household items can be purchased on the cheap at “100 fils stores” (similar to dollar stores), souqs around Kuwait, or even second-hand at the Friday Market (akin to a flea market). Also, the high turnover rate of expats in Kuwait means folks who are leaving the country will often sell their household items at a fraction of the original purchase price. Expat “going away” sales are usually listed in the
Furnished

Many furnished apartments fall into the category of “hotel apartments” which essentially means they resemble furnished apartments but also come with hotel-like amenities, including daily maid service and sometimes even breakfast. Most are furnished with Ikea-style modern furniture. The going rate for a single bedroom apartment is 350 KD, and two bedrooms run 500 KD.

Here are some websites and numbers of Hotel apartments and landlords/ladies renting furnished apartments within walking distance of AUK:


Mubbi (lovely Indian landlady who rented to two Fulbright students): 2758-4118

Mr. Hussain (rented to two Fulbright students): 9953-1743

Another site for Hotel Apartments in Kuwait: [http://www.kuwaithotels.info/show_appartments.aspx](http://www.kuwaithotels.info/show_appartments.aspx)

Finding a place to live

There are three main ways to find a place to live in Kuwait:

1. Ask a friend

2. Go through a rental agency service, e.g. Frost Realty: 2564-3149

3. Walk

It is possible, in some circumstances, to find a place to live in Kuwait by identifying the neighborhood that you want to live in, then walking around and asking the harises (doormen) if an apartment is available. This will probably not work if you are a woman without a husband or children in tow.
Visits from the opposite gender

According to strict interpretation of Kuwaiti law, unrelated (read: unmarried) men and women are not allowed to be alone in the same room, much be in the same apartment together. This law, combined with generally conservative values, often means that single men are not allowed to bring women to their apartments-- and vice versa-- even if it is a purely platonic relationship. This inconvenience can be avoided, however, by seeking out apartment complexes that cater mainly to Westerners. It is advisable to ask the landlord/apartment manager about this upfront.

U.S. Embassy Privileges

Badge

Fulbrighters can obtain a red badge from the US Embassy following completion of a two hour security briefing at the Embassy. The red badge will allow you access to the Embassy compound during working hours (i.e. 8:30-4:30 p.m. Saturday through Wednesday). There are also some restaurants and hotels around Kuwait that offer discounts with the Embassy badge; the Embassy will provide you a list of these establishments.

Happy Hour

Embassy Happy Hours are held every Monday and Wednesday evening on the Embassy compound, from about 5 p.m. – 9 p.m. They often have DJs or live bands playing. You can generally access Happy Hours with your red badge, but you are not allowed to bring any guests yourself. If you would like to bring guests, you will have to ask one of the Embassy officers, such as the Public Affairs Officer or Cultural Affairs Officer, to sponsor your guests. They will have to meet your guests at the front gate and escort them in and out of the Embassy compound.

Events

It seems the Embassy is becoming more restrictive regarding allowing Fulbrighters’ family members to attend special/holiday events (e.g. Christmas party, Easter Egg hunt, etc.). Fulbrighters themselves are generally allowed to attend all events with their red badge.
Transportation

Some Fulbrighters rely on taxis, but most rent cars. Even though the traffic looks daunting, you should seriously consider renting a car-- having a car will transform your experience, especially when you are moving around to relatively remote locations in order to do research. That said, it may be useful to use taxis for the first few weeks in order to familiarize yourself with the geography of Kuwait.

Cars

You can drive in Kuwait on the strength of your American license, though you will have to pay extra “special insurance” to do so. A number of the larger car rental agencies will allow you to do this.

Monthly car rental fees range from 100 KD-150 KD for smaller sedans and station wagons. SUVs and larger sedans start in the 200 KD range.

AUK has a special rate with Payless Car Rental, Autolease Car Rental and Rent Al Mulla. When you arrive in Kuwait, please ask the Program Coordinator about appropriate people to contact at these agencies.

Taxis

Taxis are plentiful in Kuwait. They can either be hailed on the street or requested by calling a taxi company. Most taxis have meters, and by law you can ask them to use the meter for charges. Yet the meters are rarely used, and taxi fares are according to district/neighborhood (similar to the system in Washington, D.C.). Within a district (ex. Salmiya) the charge is 1 KD. Moving between districts will increase the cost. For instance, traveling from Salmiya to Kuwait City should cost 2 KD. To/from the airport and most places in Kuwait City and suburbs, the fee will be 5 KD. Taxis from hotels and some larger malls may levy a ½ KD surcharge.

Taxi companies

- Al-Ebrahim Taxi : 2240-0013
- Al-Remal Al-Dahabia : 2572-2111
- Al-Safir Taxi : 2563-3318 or 2563-3622
- Al-Salmiya Taxi : 2572-2931
- American taxi : 2562-5116 or 2561-0435
- Dollar Taxi: 2533-8033 or 2533-8044 or 2533-8055
Money matters

Currency

The Kuwaiti dinar was recently unpegged from the dollar and tied instead to a basket of currencies including the Euro, pound, yen and others. The current exchange rate is approximately $1 = 0.29068 KD, or 1 KD = $3.44021

Fulbright funds

Fulbrighter funds are paid into US bank accounts and need to be moved to Kuwait. This is not difficult, but pay close attention to exchange rates and fees.

Cash

The best available exchange rate seems to be $100 bills. Change the bills to KD at the money changers' souq downtown. It is on the Gulf side of Fahd al-Salim street, immediately east of the park. You'll probably want to think hard about the balance between the marginally better exchange rate (with no fees) vs. the risk of losing the cash.

Credit Cards

Credit cards offer an excellent exchange rate, so long as your credit card company does not impose extra charges. Check before you come! It appears that all cards impose a 1% fee, but some add additional fees on top of this.

ATM withdrawals

ATM machines appear to offer the same excellent exchange rate as credit cards, but there are also withdrawal fees. Check with your bank before you come. Rent for apartments and cars is typically paid in cash here, so you will likely be withdrawing a lot of money from ATMs. If your current bank imposes an extra charge on this, it will likely be worth your time to find a different bank.
**Opening a bank account in Kuwait**

Technically one needs residency to open a bank account in Kuwait; if you are concerned about opening a bank account, please speak to the program coordinator and she can help set you up with the AUK HR department to try to find a solution.

**Why aren't there any American banks?**

It would appear that restrictive bank laws have prevented international banks from opening retail branches in Kuwait. There is a Citibank branch, but it does not allow withdrawals by non-business account holders. There is also an HSBC branch in Kuwait, but it also probably does not allow withdrawals by holders of personal accounts. This will probably change in the future. If it does, put all your Fulbright money into an account in a bank that has a branch in Kuwait, and you'll likely avoid all of those annoying fees.

**Medical**

The Fulbright insurance does not cover dependents. You will need medical evacuation insurance. Check to see if your home university in the States has a plan that will cover expenses outside the borders of the US.

**Clinics**

There are two private clinics in the vicinity of AUK-- New Mowasat Hospital and International Clinic. International Clinic generally provides better medical care.

Al-Salam Hospital (also private), located closer to Kuwait City (in Dasman), is recommended by many Kuwaitis.


New Mowasat Hospital: [http://www.newmowasat.com/](http://www.newmowasat.com/), 2571 1533

Al Salam Hospital: [http://www.alsalamhospital-kw.com/](http://www.alsalamhospital-kw.com/), 2253 3177

Here is some additional information on medical care in Kuwait provided on the US Embassy webpage:

[http://kuwait.usembassy.gov/medical_information.html](http://kuwait.usembassy.gov/medical_information.html)
Clothing/attire

Dress in Kuwait is certainly more conservative than the West, but less so than some neighboring Gulf countries. Women do not need to cover their heads nor wear the ‘abbaya. Short sleeves are fine for men and women, but sleeveless shirts are not advised for either gender. Men can get away with wearing shorts, but women should probably stick to pants or knee-length skirts. During the summer heat (May to September), it is advisable to wear light, breathable clothing.

Climate

From the State Department Background Notes on Kuwait (http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/35876.htm): Summers are intensely hot and dry with average highs ranging from 42°-49° C (108°-120°F); winters are short (Dec.-Feb.) and cool, averaging 10°-30° C (50°-80°F), with limited rain.

Most furnished apartments will provide space heaters for winter use, as there is no central heating. Plan on bringing a few coats and sweaters, as nighttime temperatures in December-February can be quite chilly. During the summer, the sun and heat can be brutal. Good sunglasses are necessary to prevent eye damage.

Electronics

Electrical outlets in Kuwait run on the British model. Wait until you arrive in Kuwait to purchase any adapters and converters, as they will be less expensive here than in the States. These can be purchased in grocery stores such as Sultan Center.

Communication

Cell phones

Unless you already own an unlocked tri-band or quad-band phone, it is a good idea to wait till you arrive in Kuwait to purchase an inexpensive phone at one of the large electronic stores such as Al Ghanim Electronics in Salmiya. These should cost you between 10 and 15 KD ($35 - $50). There are three telecommunications companies in Kuwait, Zain, Wataniya, and Viva. All of them have similar services and pricing. Without a Civil ID you cannot open a post-paid account, so you will have to purchase a pre-paid account. The SIM card will cost approximately 10 KD ($35). You can recharge your phone credit by
purchasing a phone card from a corner store (baqala), grocery store, phone card distributors and other locations. Recharge cards generally come in increments of 1, 2.5, 5 and 10 KD.

**Mail**

It is free to send mail within Kuwait. International mail sent from Kuwait is fairly reliable, but it is not recommended to send important documents via Kuwaiti mail. There are a number of international shipping services available in the Salmiya area, including FedEx, UPS, DHL and Aramex. Since there is no home mail delivery in Kuwait, you should plan on receiving mail at one of two addresses:

**Diplomatic pouch**: Fulbrighters are not allowed to use the Embassy APO service, but are allowed to receive small (no more than 2 lb.), flat packages via the Diplomatic pouch. Be warned, however, that it can take up to two months for mail to arrive. Dip pouch mail can be picked up from the Public Affairs section at the Embassy. Here is the address:

FB Your Name

Public Affairs Section

6200 Kuwait Place

Washington, D.C.

20521-6200

**AUK**: You are welcome to receive mail at AUK, c/o the Gulf Studies Center. When you receive mail, the program coordinator will contact you. Mail will arrive within a week from the States, though senders will have to pay international rates versus domestic rates for the Diplomatic Pouch.

Address:

Your Name

Gulf Studies Center

American University of Kuwait

PO Box 3323

Safat 13034
KUWAIT

If you need to receive FedEx or UPS packages, which cannot be delivered to PO Boxes, you can have them sent to the following address:

Your Name

Gulf Studies Center, B443

American University of Kuwait

Salmiya

Block 2

Salem Al Mubarak and Amr bin Al Aas Streets

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