

Jan - Mar 2016

Red Seas, White Sands, Blue Skies: An American Citizens Services Newsletter

On behalf of the U.S. Mission in Saudi Arabia, I would like to offer a heartfelt "Happy New Year!" to the American community. We wish you all the best in the coming year. As we all go about our lives in Saudi Arabia, let's remember to continue to be alert and take care to ensure that 2016 will be a successful, and safe, new year for all of us.

All the best,

Virginia Sher Ramadan
Consul General

To echo our Consul General, Happy New Year!

2016 promises to be another stellar year for the Embassy and our U.S. citizen community. We hope you enjoy and benefit from this first edition of "Red Seas, White Sands, Blue Skies" for 2016. In this edition, you will find helpful information on voting while abroad, international travel with minor children, and how best to prepare for tax season when overseas. We will continue to offer you helpful information in subsequent editions of our newsletter, and are eager to hear your feedback on how we can better serve U.S. citizens in the Kingdom. Always feel free to contact the American Citizens Services Unit at the Embassy at RiyadhACS@state.gov. The more we hear from you, the better we can serve you!

Our hearty wishes for a happy, and safe, new year.

Don Steele
ACS & IV Unit Chief

Let's Stay in Touch!



In an effort to improve our ability to communicate with you, the American Citizen Services section is now on Twitter! Follow us online **@KSA_ACS**.

Stay tuned for tweets regarding security messages, appointment information, services to Americans, and events. Tell your fellow U.S citizens!

Please see the updated Travel Warning for Saudi Arabia dated Sep 21, 2015 :

<http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/en/alertswarnings/saudi-arabia-travel-warning.html>

Please see Saudi Arabia's updated Country Specific Information

Nov 2014 : <http://www.travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/country/saudi-arabia.html>

Please see the all Messages for U.S citizens here:
<http://riyadh.usembassy.gov/amcitmessages.html>



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Upcoming Holiday Closures

Jan 17, 2016 - Martin Luther King Jr's Birthday

Feb 14, 2016 - Washington's Birthday

A complete list of all of our holiday closings for 2016 is available on-line at: <http://riyadh.usembassy.gov/holidays.html>

How to Reach Us

The US Embassy is located in the Diplomatic Quarter, in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

Public hours: Sunday through Thursday, 1:00pm-3:00pm

Schedule an Appointment: <https://evisaforms.state.gov/acs/default.asp?postcode=RID&appcode=1>

Phone: (966)(11)488-3800

US Consulate Jeddah
Public hours: Sunday through Thursday, 1:00-3:00pm

Schedule an Appointment: <https://evisaforms.state.gov/acs/default.asp?postcode=JDD&appcode=1>

Phone: (966)(12)667-0080

US Consulate Dhahran
Public hours: Sunday through Thursday, 1:00-3:30 pm

Schedule an Appointment: <https://evisaforms.state.gov/acs/default.asp?postcode=dhr&appcode=1>

Phone: (966)(13) 330-3200

Are You Traveling with a Minor Child?

Children - Child traveling with one parent or someone who is not a parent or legal guardian or a group

If a child (under the age of 18) is traveling with only one parent or someone who is not a parent or legal guardian, what paperwork should the adult have to indicate permission or legal authority to have that child in their care?

Due to the increasing incidents of child abductions in disputed custody cases and as possible victims of child pornography, Customs and Border Protection (CBP) strongly recommends that unless the child is accompanied by both parents, the adult have a note from the child's other parent (or, in the case of a child traveling with grandparents, uncles or aunts, sisters or brothers, friends, or in groups*, a note signed by both parents) stating "I acknowledge that my wife/husband/etc. is traveling out of the country with my son/daughter/group. He/She/They has/have my permission to do so." See our Q&A [parental consent](#).

* School groups, teen tours, vacation groups.

CBP also suggests that this note be notarized.

While CBP may not ask to see this documentation, if we do ask, and you do not have it, you may be detained until the circumstances of the child traveling without both parents can be fully assessed. If there is no second parent with legal claims to the child (deceased, sole custody, etc.) any other relevant paperwork, such as a court decision, birth certificate naming only one parent, death certificate, etc., would be useful.

Adults traveling with children should also be aware that, while the U.S. does not require this documentation, many other countries do; failure to produce notarized permission letters and/or birth certificates could result in travelers being refused entry (Canada has very strict requirements in this regard).

For more information please visit U.S. Customs and Border Protection's website [here](#)



**U.S. Customs and
Border Protection**

"Get in STEP" to receive the ACS Newsletter - Spread the Word!



Please remind your American friends to enroll in the U.S. State Department's free Smart Traveler Enrollment Program <https://step.state.gov/step/> in order for them to be included on the ACS Newsletter mailing list. It is a great way to keep abreast of any public announcements on safety and security issues in Saudi Arabia and elsewhere.

In addition, the Newsletter is a helpful resource for the latest voting news, IRS changes, and other activities concerning Americans living in Saudi Arabia. Another benefit is that if you move to another country, updating your enrollment in STEP ensures you continue to get timely information for your new country of residence!

STEP is also an important tool that consular officers around the world use during crises to distribute up to date information on emergency situations so that travelers like you can make informed decisions regarding their safety.



Leaving Saudi Arabia?

If you no longer live in or travel to Saudi Arabia, or you need to update your registration status so that you no longer receive travel updates and our ACS Newsletter, please go to the [Smart Traveler Enrollment Program \(STEP\)](#).

Updating your status in [STEP](#) will remove you from the mailing list for this newsletter and other Embassy Messages for U.S. citizens traveling to or living in Saudi Arabia. If you encounter any difficulties or have any questions about our travel registration website, please send an e-mail to CASTEP@state.gov.



Benefits.gov is the official benefits website of the U.S. government, providing citizens with an online eligibility prescreening tool to help you find government benefits that you may be eligible to receive. Benefits.gov does not allow you to apply for benefits and cannot guarantee your eligibility for any program. In addition, Benefits.gov is not designed to be a comprehensive listing of all programs for which you may be eligible. Its purpose is to provide you with a list of benefits you may be eligible to receive, as well as information on how to apply for those programs.



Overseas Citizen Voter

Overseas citizen voters face a specific set of challenges while voting absentee. Here we will provide you the information and contacts you need to successfully cast an absentee ballot.

Absentee Voting Overview

FVAP encourages the use of the Federal Post Card Application (FPCA) to start the absentee voting process. The FPCA acts as both a registration and absentee ballot request form. FVAP encourages all overseas citizens to submit a new FPCA every year and when they move. You can complete an FPCA using our easy-to-use online assistant, by selecting your State or territory of legal residence on the map to get started. The online assistant will allow you to register to vote and request your ballot for upcoming elections. The assistant will guide you through the questions on the form and produce a printable form for you. Note, you must print the form, sign it, and send it to your State according to your State's rules. It is not an online registration tool.

Voter Registration and Ballots

FVAP encourages the use of the Federal Post Card Application (FPCA) to start the absentee voting process. The FPCA acts as both a registration and absentee ballot request form. As rules vary by State, FVAP encourages overseas citizen voters to submit a new FPCA every year and, most importantly, when they move.

Never Resided in the U.S.?

Click [here](#) to see if you're eligible to vote absentee. FVAP also offers [Additional Information](#) and [Resources](#) for overseas citizens.

REGISTER AND REQUEST YOUR BALLOT FOR UPCOMING PRIMARIES

February - 30 Day Notice

New Hampshire: February 9 (P)

South Carolina: February 20 (P, Republican Primary Only)

South Carolina: February 27 (P, Democratic Primary Only, Tentative)

March - 60 Day Notice

Alabama: March 1 (P, S)

Arkansas: March 1 (P, S)

Georgia: March 1 (P)

Massachusetts: March 1 (P)

Oklahoma: March 1 (P)

Tennessee: March 1 (P)

Texas: March 1 (P, S)

Vermont: March 1 (P)

Virginia: March 1 (P)

Louisiana: March 5 (P)

Idaho: March 8 (P, Republican Primary Only)

Michigan: March 8 (P)

Mississippi: March 8 (P, S)

Puerto Rico: March 13 (P, Republican Primary Only)

Florida: March 15 (P)

Illinois: March 15 (P, S)

Missouri: March 15 (P)

North Carolina: March 15 (P,S)

Ohio: March 15 (P,S)

Arizona: March 22 (P)

April - 90 Day Notice

Wisconsin: April 5 (P)

New York: April 19 (P)

Connecticut: April 26 (P)

Delaware: April 26 (P)

Maryland: April 26 (P,S)

Pennsylvania: April 26 (P,S)

Rhode Island: April 26 (P)

Gulf Region Travel Information for U.S Citizens

Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and United Arab Emirates are all exciting countries with many interesting adventures to experience. We hope that by following the tips in this guide, your trip will also be a safe one.

Please copy and paste the address in your Internet browser to view the brochure: [http://travel.state.gov/content/dam/passports/Arabian%20Gulf%20ACS%20Brochure%20\(2\).pdf#](http://travel.state.gov/content/dam/passports/Arabian%20Gulf%20ACS%20Brochure%20(2).pdf#)



[IRS.GOV](http://www.irs.gov)

The [IRS Home Page](#), provides a lot of useful information for taxpayers and should be your first stop for tax questions and forms. In particular, visit the IRS's website for [U.S. Citizens and Residents Aliens Abroad](#).

Contacting the IRS

Unfortunately, neither the Embassy in Riyadh nor any of our Consulates in Saudi Arabia can answer tax-related questions. Please address questions to the I.R.S. directly. [Visit the IRS website for further information.](#)

IRS Forms

Tax forms are available by mail from the IRS or [the IRS website online](#).

They can also get information [from the IRS website online](#).

Most forms are also available on [Forms & Publications](#).

[Visit the IRS website](#) for a list of topics of interest to overseas residents.



IRS Information for U.S. Citizens and Resident Aliens Abroad:

[The IRS website](#) has a lot of information that will prove valuable to the overseas residents.

Where to File

Please [visit the IRS website](#) for information on where to file.

[2016 Tax Season Opens Jan. 19 for Nation's Taxpayers](#)

WASHINGTON (Dec 21, 2015) — Following a review of the tax extenders legislation signed into law last week, the Internal Revenue Service announced today that the nation's tax season will begin as scheduled on Tuesday, Jan. 19, 2016.

The IRS will begin accepting individual electronic returns that day. The IRS expects to receive more than 150 million individual returns in 2016, with more than four out of five being prepared using tax return preparation software and e-filed. The IRS will begin processing paper tax returns at the same time. There is no advantage to people filing tax returns on paper in early January instead of waiting for e-file to begin.

"We look forward to opening the 2016 tax season on time," IRS Commissioner John Koskinen said. "Our employees have been working hard throughout this year to make this happen. We also appreciate the help from the nation's tax professionals and the software community, who are critical to helping taxpayers during the filing season."

As part of the [Security Summit](#) initiative, the IRS has been working closely with the tax industry and state revenue departments to provide stronger protections against identity theft for taxpayers during the coming filing season. The filing deadline to submit 2015 tax returns is Monday, April 18, 2016, rather than the traditional April 15 date. Washington, D.C., will celebrate Emancipation Day on that Friday, which pushes the deadline to the following Monday for most of the nation. (Due to Patriots Day, the deadline will be Tuesday, April 19, in Maine and Massachusetts.)

More information can be found here:

<https://www.irs.gov/uac/Newsroom/2016-Tax-Season-Opens-Jan-19-for-Nations-Taxpayers>

[The IRS Paris Office is CLOSED](#)

This office no longer offers taxpayer assistance (including by mail, fax, walk-ins, or telephone). Please DO NOT send any more IRS forms or tax correspondence to the U.S. Embassy in Paris. Please send all mail directly to the U.S. addresses provided in each forms' instructions.

If you are a taxpayer with specific individual or business account questions you should contact the International Taxpayer Service Call Center by phone or fax. The International Call Center is operational Monday through Friday, from 6:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. (American Eastern Time):

Phone: +1-267-941-1000

Fax: +1-267-941-1055

Mail: Internal Revenue Service

International Accounts

Philadelphia, PA 19255-0725 USA

Business taxpayers located outside the U.S. may also contact the IRS by mail at:

Internal Revenue Service

International Accounts

Ogden, UT 84201-0038

If you are a tax professional or software provider calling about an e-file issue and it is not account related, please contact the e-help office in Austin at +1-512-416-7750. Assistors are available Monday through Friday, from 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. (American Central time).

Travel with a Pet



Export: Take your pet from the United States to a foreign country.

Are you travelling to another country and bringing along Fluffy or Fido? You'll need to meet the animal health requirements of the country you are visiting. As soon as you know where you are heading and when, talk to your local veterinarian. He or she can help you work through the pet export process. This can involve getting a health certificate, updating vaccinations, completing disease testing, and having your paperwork reviewed and endorsed by APHIS.

Here is a list to help you get started:

https://www.aphis.usda.gov/wps/portal/aphis/ourfocus/importexport/sa_animals/sa_pet_travel

Import: Bring your pet into the United States from a foreign country:

https://www.aphis.usda.gov/wps/portal/aphis/ourfocus/importexport/sa_animals/sa_pet_travel

Useful Links

[Understanding Pet Travel \(video\)](#)

[U.S. Department of State Pet Travel Policies](#)

[Center for Disease Control - Bringing Pets into the United States](#)

[Disease restrictions - National Center for Import and Export \(NCIE\).](#)

[U.S. Customs and Border Patrol \(CBP\) publication on pet travel](#)

[International Export Requirements by Destination Country](#)

[Additional information on Pet exports](#)

Martin Luther King, Jr. Day is a United States federal holiday marking the birthday of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. It is observed on the third Monday of January each year, which is around the time of King's birthday, January 15. This year will mark the 53rd anniversary of the famous "I Have a Dream" speech which Dr. King delivered on August 28, 1963, on the steps of the Washington, D.C., Lincoln Memorial during the march on Washington for jobs and freedom.

I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: "We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal." I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slaveowners will be able to sit down together at a table of brotherhood. I have a dream that one day even the state of Mississippi, a desert state, sweltering with the heat of injustice and oppression, will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice. I have a dream that my four children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character. I have a dream today."



Until the mid-1970s, the February 22 birthday of George Washington, hero of the Revolutionary War and first president of the United States, was a national holiday. In addition, the February 12 birthday of Abraham Lincoln, the president during the Civil War (1861-1865), was a holiday in most states.

In the 1970s, Congress declared that in order to honor all past presidents of the United States, a single holiday, to be called Presidents' Day, would be observed on the third Monday in February. In many states, however, the holiday continues to be known as George Washington's birthday.



A disaster supplies kit is simply a collection of basic items your household may need in the event of an emergency. Try to assemble your kit well in advance of an emergency. You may have to evacuate at a moment's notice and take essentials with you. You will probably not have time to search for the supplies you need or shop for them. You may need to survive on your own after an emergency. This means having your own food, water and other supplies in sufficient quantity to last for at least 72 hours. Local officials and relief workers will be on the scene after a disaster but they cannot reach everyone immediately. You could get help in hours or it might take days. Additionally, basic services such as electricity, gas, water, sewage treatment and telephones may be cut off for days or even a week, or longer. Your supplies kit should contain items to help you manage during these outages.

For more information on building and maintaining a disaster/emergency supply kit, go the following Ready.gov website for useful suggestions and instructions.