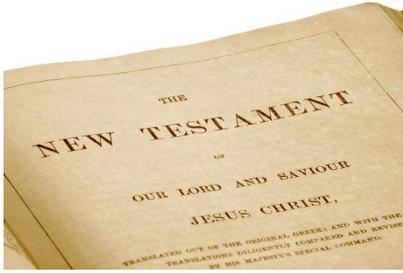


BIBLE PROHIBITED IN SAUDI ARABIA



The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is definitely a place worth visiting. However, despite all the efforts and all the steps of Arabian authorities to promote tourism, there are still important issues that can bother possible visitors of Saudi Arabia.

Local officials prohibit visitors to bring alcohol, firearms, pork products, religious items, and naturally pornographic materials. The Web site of Saudi Arabian Airlines also informs that items and articles belonging to religions other than Islam are also prohibited. These may include among other things Bibles, crucifixes, statues, carvings, items with religious symbols such as the Star of David, and others. This fact raised recently a great opposition from the side of European as well as American tourists and some experts say this might have impact on the tourism industry.

There are many places of natural beauty as well as interesting historical or religious sites in the country and Saudi Arabia naturally wants to draw more tourists. In fact the Supreme Commission for Tourism Secretary General Prince Sultan Bin Salman Bin Abdul Aziz has signed a contract with an international media company to make promotional documentaries and clips about the kingdom. The company will produce short clips promoting the natural beauty of the Kingdom, its mountains, seacoasts, history, culture, shopping malls, entertainment and recreational facilities. All the clips will be shown in English and Arabic via electronic media, exhibitions, and festivals.

An inconvenient fact is that visa is needed if someone wants to travel to the kingdom. The Supreme Commission for Tourism is making steps to improve the industry. It has announced issuing group visas to foreigners through tour operators and granting longer entry visas. Saudi Arabia has also changed its policy towards photography. Until recently, photography was prohibited in the Kingdom but now people are allowed to take pictures in public areas as long as it does not involve invasion of privacy. This is another step that should make the stay here more enjoyable to tourists. The Supreme Commission for Tourism hopes to boost the number of foreign tourists to 1.5 million annually by 2020.

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