

[août 2014]

**A General Overview of the GCC Countries :  
Geography, Language, Religion, Dress code**

The Arabian Peninsula is located in the southwestern region of the Asian continent covering around 3 million square kilometers. The southeastern area of the peninsula is the Rub'al-Khali (the Empty Quarter) which is the world's largest expanse of continuous sand. Politically, the Arabian Peninsula consists of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, the Sultanate of Oman, and the Republic of Yemen. Apart from Yemen, these countries constitute the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), founded on 26 May 1981. The aim of GCC is to promote coordination between member states in all fields in order to achieve unity. (His Highness Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, 2014). Figure 1 shows the location map of the GCC countries, followed by a summary of key information on each country.

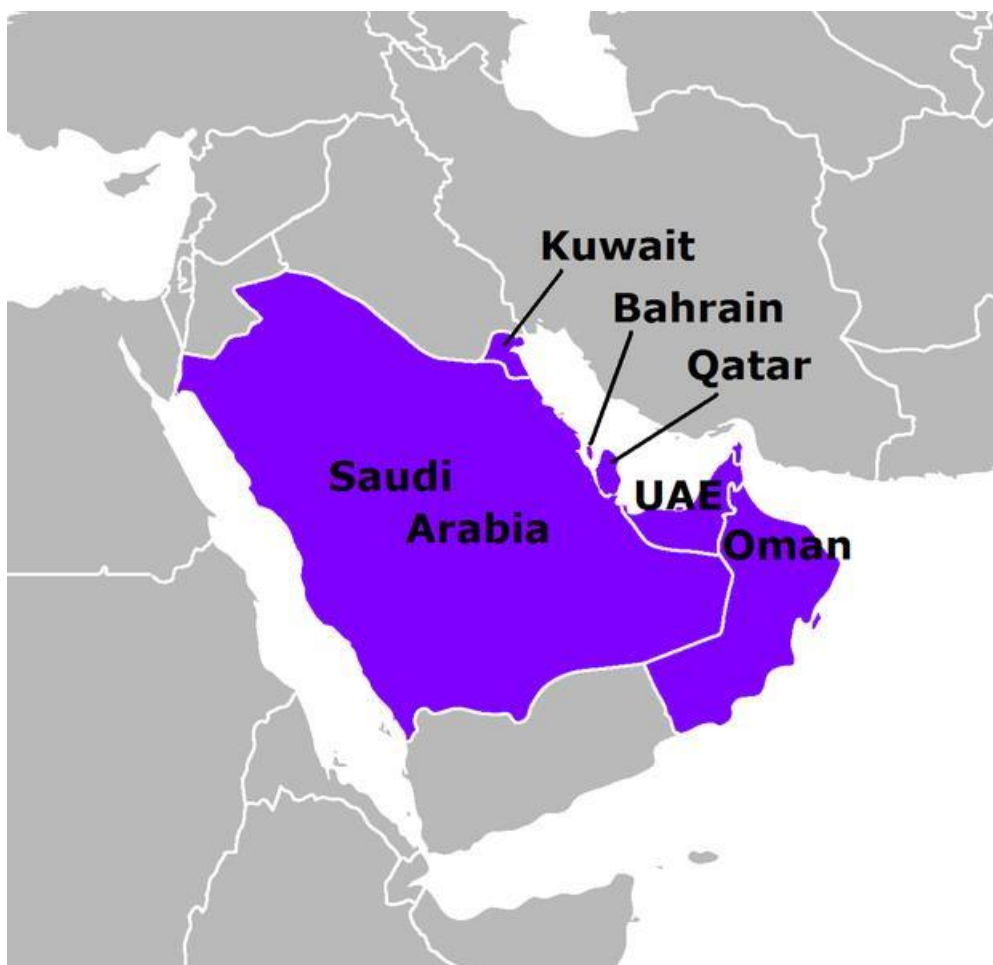


Figure 1: Location Map of GCC Countries (Wikipedia, 2014)

**Language**

Arabic is the official language of the GCC countries. It is one of six official languages of the United Nations and is spoken by as many as 422 million speakers in the Arab countries (UNESCO, 2014). The Arabic language belongs to the Semitic language family. It is also a liturgical language of 1.6 billion Muslim speakers. (Pewforum, 2014) In addition to Arabic, English is widely spoken by most of the GCC nationals. Other languages such as Hindi, Farsi, Bengali, Malayam, Punjabi and Tagalog can be found but those are mainly related to expats from India, south East Asia, and Africa working in the GCC countries.



### Religion

When dealing with GCC visitors and to better understand their traditions and customs it is important to understand their religion. In the Gulf region, the main religion is Islam. The word 'Islam' in Arabic means 'submission' and derives from 'peace'. In a religious context, it means complete submission to the will of God (IslamiFinder, 2014). Beyond its spiritual dimension, it specifies the rules of life, duties and obligations of a Muslim (IslamiFinder, 2014).

### Dress Code

In GCC countries traditional dresses are worn : long dress shirt with long sleeves, on top of the dress a coat (abaya) is worn. On the head, men wear ghutra or shmagh. When travelling, some maintain their traditional dresses and others adapt to a Western style outfit.



Source: <http://gulfnnews.com/celebrating-the-traditional-dress-1.68053>



Source : <http://smccdubai.wordpress.com/visitors-ask>