

Centre of the world

Riyadh is the hottest capital city on the planet right now, with Saudi Arabia moving fast on diversifying its economy

With an ancient history that stretches over more than 2,000 years, Riyadh is a city charged by the colourful and magical journey it has been on: from the pre-Islamic era and ancient Arab tribe Banu Hanifa inhabiting the area of al-Yamama, to launching the biggest challenge ever seen to soccer giant the English Premier League with billions of dollars being pumped into economy diversification. Today, Riyadh is one of the largest and busiest cities in the Middle

East, home to more than seven million people from different ethnic and religious backgrounds.

WHERE TO STAY

Located in the heart of the city, the Al Faisaliah Hotel is one of the most iconic and sought-after addresses in Saudi Arabia. Its timeless elegance, central location and panoramic views are complemented by Mandarin Oriental's signature service.

Closer to the business and financial district, with walking

access to the Olaya Towers, Riyadh's most luxurious mall, Centria, and the city's most vibrant scene at Tahlia Street, Hyatt's Regency Riyadh Olaya features 257 guestrooms, span across 28 floors, including the city's most elevated lounge, Regency Club™, on the 26th floor, Hyatt's "hotel within a hotel" concept.

For a more discreet luxury stay, incorporating relaxing greenery, the The Ritz-Carlton, Riyadh is lush with 600-year-old olive trees, landscaped gardens and swaying

palms. It is an elegant oasis with spacious suites, a world-class spa, a stunning indoor pool, lavish wedding and event spaces and exceptional dining.

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THE RITZ CARLTON RIYADH

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WHERE TO DINE

Saudi Arabia is a country quickly becoming a culinary destination, and in addition to the Ritz Carlton's renowned international and Middle Eastern buffet Al Orjouan, classic Italian restaurant Azzurro and leisurely brunch and afternoon tea venue Chorisia Lounge, a number of new celebrity-owned restaurants have opened their doors.

Left: The Riyadh Kingdom Tower is a business and convention centre and a shopping mall
 Top: The Official Saudi Arabia tourism exhibitor pavilion
 Above: Mixed-use complex Al Faisaliah Tower
 Right: Entrance to the Janadriyah Festival



Nancy Silverton, the renowned chef, baker and owner of Chi Spacca restaurant (among other brands) recently opened the first-ever Chi Spacca outside of the popular LA venue. The newly opened Italian restaurant aims to replicate the success and essence of its original counterpart, while adapting to the local palette.

Wolfgang Puck is a name synonymous with culinary excellence and innovation. As the founder of the iconic Spago restaurant and a pioneer in the food industry, Puck has built a brand that is renowned for its exceptional quality and unique dining experiences. And finally, renowned Japanese chef Hisato Hamada has

introduced his high-end eateries. These include a members-only restaurant Wayumafia, along with Yakinikumafia – a wagyu barbecue joint – and Mashi No Mashi, a wagyu ramen and gyoza bar.

WHAT TO DO

Business district landmarks include the 302m-high Kingdom Centre, with a sky bridge connecting two towers, and 267m-high Al Faisaliah Centre, with a glass-globe summit. In the historical Deira district, Masmak Fort marks the site of the 1902 raid that gave the Al Sauds control of Riyadh.

The city is known as the cultural capital of Saudi Arabia due to its numerous cultural centres, including the King 'Abd al-'Aziz Historical Centre, the National Museum, and the National Library. But it's the future, not necessarily the past, that is on everyone's lips in Saudi Arabia, as soccer stars arrive from the Premier League, La Liga, Serie A and all of the world's top leagues.

The city hosts four major football clubs; Neymar's Al Hilal have won 15 championships in the Saudi Professional League. Cristiano Ronaldo's Al-Nassr have won seven and Al-Shabab six, with Al-Riyadh still to win a title. The city also has several large stadiums such as King Fahd International Stadium with a seating capacity of 70,000. alriyadh.gov.sa/en ■

