

Language

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Learning a few basics for day-to-day traveling doesn't take long at all, but to master the complexities of Arabic would take years of consistent study. The whole issue is complicated by the differences between Classical Arabic (*fus-ha*), its modern descendant MSA (Modern Standard Arabic) and regional dialects. The classical tongue is the language of the Quran and Arabic poetry of centuries past. For a long time it remained static, but in order to survive it had to adapt to change, and the result is more or less MSA, the common language of the press, radio and educated discourse. It is as close to a *lingua franca* (common language) as the Arab world comes, and is generally understood – if not always well spoken – across the Arab world.

For most outsiders trying to learn Arabic, the most frustrating thing is understanding the spoken language (wherever you are), as there is virtually no written material to refer to for back up. Acquisition of MSA is a long-term investment, and an esoteric argument flows back and forward about the relative merits of learning MSA first (and so perhaps having to wait some time before being able to communicate adequately with people in the street) or learning a dialect. All this will give you an inkling of why so few non-Arabs, or non-Muslims, embark on a study of the language.

Mercifully, the words and phrases a traveller is most likely to use are fairly standard throughout the Arabian Peninsula, and the words and phrases that follow should be understood anywhere in the region. For a handy guide to the specific variety of colloquial Arabic spoken on the Arabian Peninsula and elsewhere, get a copy of Lonely Planet's *Middle East Phrasebook*.

PRONUNCIATION

Pronunciation of Arabic can be tongue-ttying for someone unfamiliar with the intonation and combination of sounds. This language guide should help, but bear in mind that the myriad rules governing pronunciation and vowel use are too extensive to be covered here.

Vowels

Technically, there are three long and three short vowels in Arabic. The reality is a little different, with local dialect and varying consonant combinations affecting the pronunciation of vowels. This is the case throughout the Arabic-speaking world. More like five short and five long vowels can be identified; in this guide we use all of these except the long **o**.

a	as in 'had'
aa	as the 'a' in 'father'
e	short, as in 'bet'; long, as in 'there'
i	as in 'hit'
ee	as in 'beer', only softer
o	as in 'hot'
u	as in 'put'
oo	as in 'food'

Consonants

Pronunciation for all Arabic consonants is covered in the alphabet table (opposite). It's important to note that when double consonants occur in transliterations, both are pronounced. For example, *al-Hammam* (toilet), is pronounced 'al-ham-mam'.

OTHER SOUNDS

Arabic has two sounds that are very tricky for non-Arabs to produce, the 'ayn and the

STANDARD ARABIC ALPHABET

Final	Medial	Initial	Alone	Transliteration	Pronunciation
ا			ا	aa	as in 'father'
ب	ب	ب	ب	b	as in 'bet'
ت	ت	ت	ت	t	as in 'ten'
ث	ث	ث	ث	th	as in 'thin'
ج	ج	ج	ج	j/g	as in 'jet'; sometimes as the 'g' in 'go'
ح	ح	ح	ح	H	a strongly whispered 'h', like a sigh of relief
خ	خ	خ	خ	kh	as the 'ch' in Scottish <i>loch</i>
د	د	د	د	d	as in 'dim'
ذ	ذ	ذ	ذ	dh	as the 'th' in 'this'; also as d or z
ر			ر	r	a rolled 'r', as in the Spanish word <i>caro</i>
ز			ز	z	as in 'zip'
س	س	س	س	s	as in 'so', never as in 'wisdom'
ش	ش	ش	ش	sh	as in 'ship'
ص	ص	ص	ص	ṣ	emphatic 's'
ض	ض	ض	ض	ḍ	emphatic 'd'
ط	ط	ط	ط	ṭ	emphatic 't'
ظ	ظ	ظ	ظ	ẓ	emphatic 'z'
ع	ع	ع	ع	'	the Arabic letter 'ayn; pronounce as a glottal stop – like the closing of the throat before saying 'Oh-oh!' (see Other Sounds, opposite)
غ	غ	غ	غ	gh	a guttural sound like Parisian 'r'
ف	ف	ف	ف	f	as in 'far'
ق	ق	ق	ق	q	a strongly guttural 'k' sound; also often pronounced as a glottal stop
ك	ك	ك	ك	k	as in 'king'
ل	ل	ل	ل	l	as in 'lamb'
م	م	م	م	m	as in 'me'
ن	ن	ن	ن	n	as in 'name'
ه	ه	ه	ه	h	as in 'ham'
و			و	w	as in 'wet'; or
				oo	long, as in 'food'; or
				ow	as in 'how'
ي	ي	ي	ي	y	as in 'yes'; or
				ee	as in 'beer', only softer; or
				ai/ay	as in 'aisle'/as the 'ay' in 'day'

Vowels Not all Arabic vowel sounds are represented in the alphabet. For more information on the vowel sounds used in this language guide, see Pronunciation (opposite).

Emphatic Consonants To simplify the transliteration system used in this book, the emphatic consonants have not been included.

glottal stop. The letter 'ayn represents a sound with no English equivalent that comes even close. It is similar to the glottal stop (which is not actually represented in the alphabet) but the muscles at the back of the throat are gagged more forcefully – it has been described as the sound of someone being strangled. In many transliteration systems 'ayn is represented by an opening quotation mark, and the glottal stop by a closing quotation mark. To make the transliterations in this language guide (and throughout the rest of the book) easier to use, we haven't distinguished between the glottal stop and the 'ayn, using the closing quotation mark to represent both sounds. You should find that Arabic speakers will still understand you.

TRANSLITERATION

It's worth noting here that transliteration from the Arabic script into English – or any other language for that matter – is at best an approximate science.

The presence of sounds unknown in European languages and the fact that the script is 'defective' (most vowels are not written) combine to make it nearly impossible to settle on one universally accepted method of transliteration. A wide variety of spellings is therefore possible for words when they appear in Latin script – and that goes for places and people's names as well.

While striving to reflect the language as closely as possible and aiming at consistency, this book generally spells place, street and hotel names and the like as the locals have done. Don't be surprised if you come across several versions of the same thing.

ACCOMMODATION

I'm looking for ...	<i>ana badawar ala ...</i>
a youth hostel	<i>bayt al-shabaab funduq</i>
I'd like to book a ...	<i>ana abga/(abee) eHjaz ...</i> (Kuwait & Bahrain)
Do you have a ...?	<i>fee aindakoum ...?</i>
(cheap) room	<i>ghurfa (rakheesa)</i>
single room	<i>ghurfa miferda</i>
double room	<i>ghurfa muzdawaja</i>

May I see the room?	<i>mumkin ashuf al-ghurfa?</i>
May I see other rooms?	<i>mumkin ashuf ghuraf thaania?</i>

How much is this room per night?
It's very expensive.
Do you have any cheaper rooms?

This is fine.
for one night
for two nights
It's very noisy.
It's very dirty.
Where is the bathroom?
I'm leaving today.
We're leaving today.

address	<i>al-anwaar</i>
air-conditioning	<i>mookayif/kondishen</i>
blanket	<i>al-bataaniyya</i>
camp site	<i>al-mukhayam</i>
hot water	<i>al-mayya saakhma</i>
key	<i>al-miftah</i>
manager	<i>al-mudeer</i>
shower	<i>al-dooosh</i>
soap	<i>al-saboon</i>
toilet	<i>al-Hammam</i>

CONVERSATION & GREETINGS

Arabs place great importance on civility and it's rare to see any interaction between people that doesn't begin with profuse greetings, inquiries into the other's health and other niceties.

Arabic greetings are more formal than in English and there is a reciprocal response to each. These sometimes vary slightly, depending on whether you're addressing a man or a woman. A simple encounter can become a drawn-out affair, with neither side wanting to be the one to put a halt to the stream of greetings and well-wishing. As an *ajnabi* (foreigner), you're not expected to know all the ins and outs, but if you come up with the right expression at the appropriate moment the locals will love it.

The most common greeting is *al-salaam alaykum* (peace be upon you), to which the correct reply is *wa alaykum al-salaam* (and upon you be peace). If you get invited to a birthday celebration or are around for any of the big holidays, the common greeting is *kul sana wa intum bikher* (I wish you well for the coming year).

Arrival in one piece is always something to be grateful for. Passengers will often be

cham ujrta haathil ghurfa fil-leila?
hatha ghali jeddan fi ghuraf arkhas?

hatha zein lee layla wahda lee layla ten hathee feeha dajeh kaseer hathee washka kaseer wayn el-Hammam?

ana musafer al-yom neHna musafereen al-yom

al-anwaar mookayif/kondishen al-bataaniyya al-mukhayam al-mayya saakhma al-miftah al-mudeer al-dooosh al-saboon al-Hammam

greeted with *al-Hamdu lillah al al-salaama* (thank God for your safe arrival).

Hello. *al-salaam alaykum*
Hello. (response) *wa alaykum al-salaam*
Hello. (informal) *marHaba/ya marHaba*

It's an important custom in Arab countries to ask after a person's or their family's health when greeting, eg *chayf es-saHa?* (How is your health?), *chayf al-ahal?* (How is the family?). The response is *bikher il-Hamdu lillah* (Fine, thank you).

Goodbye. *ma'al salaama*
Goodbye. (response) (to a man) *alla ysalma*
(to a woman) *alla ysalnich*
(to a group) *alla ysallimkum*
Goodbye. (to a man) *Hayyaakallah*
(to a woman) *Hayyachallah*
(to a group) *Hayyakumallah*
Goodbye. (response) (to a man) *alla yHai'eek*
(to a woman) *alla yHai'eech*
(to a group) *alla yHai'eeukum*

Good night. (to a man) *tisbaH ala-kher*
(to a woman) *tisbiHin ala-kher*
(to a group) *tisbuHun ala-kher*

Good night. (response) (to a man) *wa inta min ahliil-kher*
(to a woman) *wa inti min ahliil-kher*
(to a group) *wa intu min ahliil-kher*
Welcome. *ahlan wa sahan/marHaba*

Welcome to you. (to a man) *ahlan beek*
(to a woman) *ahlan beechi*
(to a group) *ahlan beekum*
Pleased to meet you. *fursa sa'ida* (also said to people as they are leaving)

Pleased to meet you. (response) (by an individual) *wa ana as'ad*
(by a group) *wa ihna as'ad*
How are you? (to a man) *kief ul-hal?*
(to a woman) *shlonik?/kef Halak?*
(to a group) *shlonich?/kef Halik?*
shlonikum?/kef Halkum?
Fine, thanks. *bkher al-Hamdu lillah or tamмам*

(by a man) *zein al-Hamdu lillah*
(by a woman) *zeina al-Hamdu lillah*
(by a group) *zeinin al-Hamdu lillah*

What's your name? (to a man) *shismak?*
(to a woman) *shismich?*
(to a group) *shisimkum?*
My name is ... *ismi ...*
I'm ... *ana ...*

Where are you from? *min wayn inta?*
I'm from ... *ana min ...*
Do you like ...? *inta/inti bitHib ...?* (m/f)
I like ... *ana bHib ...*
I don't like ... *ana ma bHib ...*
Yes. *aiwa/na'am*
No. *la'*
Maybe. *mumkin*
Please. (to a man) *min fadhla*
(to a woman) *min fadhlich*
(to a group) *min fadhlekum*
Thank you. *baraka Allah beek* (God bless you) or *shukran* (also *mashkur* in UAE)
afwan/al-afu

You're welcome.
Excuse me. (to a man) *lau samaHt*
(to a woman) *lau samaHti*
(to a group) *lau samaHtu*
After you. *atfaddal*
OK. *zein/kwayyis/tayib*
No problem. *mafee mushkala*
Impossible. *mish mumkin*
It doesn't matter/ I don't care. *ma'alish*

DIRECTIONS

How do I get to ...? *keef boosal lil ...?*
Can you show me the way to ...? *mumkin tdallini ala tareeq lil ...?*
How many kilometres? *cham kilometa?*
What street is this? *shoo-hatha sharai?*

to/for left *lil*
right *shimaal/yasaar*
straight *yimeen*
street *ala tool/(sida)* (UAE)
number *shaari'*
city *raqam*
village *madina*
at the next corner *qaria*
this way *thani mafraq*
here/there *matn hina*
in front of *hina/hinak*
near *chiddaam/(qiddaam)* (UAE)
far *gareeb*
ba'eed

EMERGENCIES

Help me!	<i>saa' idoonee!</i>
I'm sick.	<i>ana maareed/mareeda (m/f)</i>
Call the police!	<i>itaseel bil shurta!</i>
doctor	<i>al-tabeeb</i>
hospital	<i>al-mustashfa</i>
police	<i>al-shurta</i>
Go away/Get lost!	<i>imshee! (also seer! in UAE)</i>
Shame on you!	<i>istiHi a'la Haalak! (said by a woman)</i>

north	<i>shimaal</i>
south	<i>janub</i>
east	<i>sharg</i>
west	<i>gharb</i>

HEALTH

I'm ill.	<i>ana maareed</i>
My friend is ill.	<i>sadeeyee maareed</i>
It hurts here.	<i>bee yu ja nee hina</i>
I'm ...	<i>andee ...</i>
asthmatic	<i>azmit raboo</i>
diabetic	<i>al-sukkar</i>
epileptic	<i>al-saraa</i>
I'm allergic ...	<i>andee Hasasiyya ...</i>
to antibiotics	<i>min al-mudad alhayawee</i>
to aspirin	<i>min al-asbireen</i>
to bees	<i>min al-naHl</i>
to nuts	<i>min al-mukassarat</i>
to penicillin	<i>min al-binisileen</i>

antiseptic	<i>mutahhir</i>
aspirin	<i>asbireen</i>
Band-Aids	<i>dammad lazeg</i>
chemist/pharmacy	<i>al-sayidaliyya</i>
condoms	<i>kaboot</i>
contraceptive	<i>waseela lee man'al-Haml</i>
diarrhoea	<i>is-haal</i>
fever	<i>sukhooma</i>
headache	<i>suda' ras/waja' ras</i>
hospital	<i>mustashfa</i>
medicine	<i>dawa</i>
pregnant	<i>Haamel</i>
prescription	<i>wasfa/rashetta</i>
sanitary napkins	<i>fuwat saHiyya</i>
stomachache	<i>waja' feel bat-n</i>
sunblock cream	<i>marham wagee min ashat alshams</i>

tampons	<i>tambaks (as in the brand name 'Tampax') or, more formally, fuwat saHiyya leel Hareem</i>
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LANGUAGE DIFFICULTIES

I understand.

(by a man)	<i>ana fahim</i>
(by a woman)	<i>ana fahma</i>

I don't understand.

(by a man)	<i>ana mu fahim</i>
(by a woman)	<i>ana mu fahma</i>
Do you speak English/ French/German?	<i>tikkalam ingleezi/ fransawi/almaani?</i>
I don't speak Arabic.	<i>ma-atkalam arabi</i>

I want an interpreter.	<i>ana abga/(abee) mutarjem (Kuwait & Bahrain)</i>
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Could you write it down, please?	<i>mumkin tiktbaa lee, min fadlach</i>
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How do you say ... in Arabic?	<i>chayf tegool ... bil'arabi?</i>
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NUMBERS

0	<i>sifr</i>	.
1	<i>waHid</i>	١
2	<i>ithneen</i>	٢
3	<i>thalatha</i>	٣
4	<i>arba'a</i>	٤
5	<i>khamasa</i>	٥
6	<i>sitta</i>	٦
7	<i>saba'a</i>	٧
8	<i>tamaniya</i>	٨
9	<i>tis'a</i>	٩
10	<i>ashra</i>	١٠
11	<i>Hda'ash</i>	١١
12	<i>thna'ash</i>	١٢
13	<i>thalathta'ash</i>	١٣
14	<i>arbatash</i>	١٤
15	<i>khamistash</i>	١٥
16	<i>sittash</i>	١٦
17	<i>sabit'ash</i>	١٧
18	<i>thimanta'ash</i>	١٨
19	<i>tisita'ash</i>	١٩
20	<i>'ishreen</i>	٢٠
21	<i>waHid wa 'ishreen</i>	٢١
22	<i>itnayn wa 'ishreen</i>	٢٢
30	<i>thalatheen</i>	٣٠
40	<i>arbi'een</i>	٤٠
50	<i>khamseen</i>	٥٠
60	<i>sitteen</i>	٦٠
70	<i>saba'een</i>	٧٠
80	<i>thimaneen</i>	٨٠
90	<i>tis'een</i>	٩٠
100	<i>imia</i>	١٠٠
200	<i>imiatayn</i>	٢٠٠
1000	<i>'alf</i>	١٠٠٠
2000	<i>'alfayn</i>	٢٠٠٠
3000	<i>thalath-alf</i>	٣٠٠٠

PAPERWORK

date of birth

<i>tareekh al-welada/al-meelad</i>
<i>al-ism</i>
<i>al-jenseeya</i>
<i>jawaz al-safar/al-bassbor</i>
<i>tasreeh</i>
<i>makka al-welada/meelad</i>
<i>ta'sheera/feeza</i>

name

nationality

passport

permit

place of birth

visa

SHOPPING & SERVICES

I'm looking for ...	<i>ana adawar ala ...</i>
	<i>ana abHath aa'n ...</i>

Where is the ...?	<i>wein al ...?</i>
bank	<i>el-bank</i>
beach	<i>il-shatt/il-shaat'i</i>
embassy	<i>el-safara</i>
exchange office	<i>maktab el-sirafa</i>
laundry	<i>el-ghaseel</i>
market	<i>el-souq</i>
mosque	<i>el-masjid</i>
museum	<i>el-mathaf</i>
newsagents	<i>el-maktaba</i>
old city	<i>el-madina il-qadima</i>
palace	<i>el-qasr</i>
police station	<i>el-makhfar</i>
post office	<i>maktab al-bareed</i>
restaurant	<i>el-mataam</i>
telephone	<i>el-telefon/el-hataf</i>
telephone office	<i>maktab el-Hatef</i>
toilet	<i>el-Hammam</i>
tourist office	<i>maktab el-seeyaHa</i>

nappies (diapers)	<i>Hafadat leel atfal</i>
disposable nappies	<i>bamberz (brand name)</i>
formula (baby's milk)	<i>Haleeb mujafaf leel atfal</i>

I want to change ...	<i>ana abga/(abee asrif) ... (Kuwait & Bahrain)</i>
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money	<i>floos</i>
travellers cheques	<i>sheikat siyaHeeya</i>

I want ...	<i>ana abga/(abee) ... (Kuwait & Bahrain)</i>
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Where can I buy ...?	<i>wein agdar ashtiri...?</i>
Do you have ...?	<i>indik (to a man)</i>
	<i>indich (to a woman)</i>

Is there ...?	<i>fee andakum ...?</i>
What is this?	<i>shoo Hadha?</i>
How much?	<i>bcham/(gedash)? (Saudi & Yemen)</i>

How many?	<i>cham?</i>
It's too expensive.	<i>ghalee/ghalia wa'id (m/f)</i>
There isn't (any).	<i>mafee (walashai)</i>
May I look at it?	<i>mumkin ashoof il?</i>

What time does it open?

sa'acham yeftaH?

What time does it close?

sa'a cham yegfell/(yebannad)? (UAE & Bahrain)

I'd like to make a telephone call.

ana abga/(abee) sawee mookalama (Kuwait & Bahrain)

TIME & DATES

What time is it?	<i>as-sa'a kam?</i>
It's ...	<i>as-sa'a ...</i>
one o'clock	<i>waHda</i>
1.15	<i>waHda wa rob'</i>
1.20	<i>waHda wa tilt</i>
1.30	<i>waHda wa nus</i>
1.45	<i>ithneen illa rob' (literally 'quarter to two')</i>

daily	<i>kil yom</i>
today	<i>al-yom</i>
yesterday	<i>ams</i>
tomorrow	<i>bukra/bacher</i>
early	<i>mbach'ir/badri</i>
late	<i>mit'akhir</i>

Monday	<i>yom al-ithneen</i>
Tuesday	<i>yom al-thalath</i>
Wednesday	<i>yom al-arbaa'</i>
Thursday	<i>yom al-khamis</i>
Friday	<i>yom al-jama'a</i>
Saturday	<i>yom as-sabt</i>
Sunday	<i>yom al-Had</i>

The Western Calendar Months

The Islamic year has 12 lunar months and is 11 days shorter than the Western (Gregorian) calendar, so important Muslim dates will occur 11 days earlier each (Western) year.

There are two Gregorian calendars in use in the Arab world. In Egypt and westwards, the months have virtually the same names as in English (January is *yanaayir*, October is *octobar* and so on), but in Lebanon and eastwards, the names are quite different. Talking about, say, June as 'month six' is the easiest solution, but for the sake of completeness, the months from January are:

January	<i>kanoon ath-thani</i>
February	<i>shubaat</i>
March	<i>azaar</i>
April	<i>nisaan</i>
May	<i>ayyaar</i>
June	<i>Huzayraan</i>
July	<i>tammooz</i>

August	'aab
September	aylool
October	tishreen al-awal
November	tishreen ath-thani
December	kaanoon al-awal

TRANSPORT

Public Transport

Where is the ...?	wein al ...?
How far is ...?	cham yibe'id ...?
the bus stop	mogaf al-bas
the bus station	maHattat al-bas
the train station	maHattat al-qatar
a taxi stand	mogaf el-taks
the airport	al-mataar

boat	markab
bus	al-bas
taxi	el-taks
ticket office	maktab al-tathaaker

I want to go to ... *abga/(abee) arouH li ... (Kuwait & Bahrain)*

When does the ... leave? *mata yamshi il ...*

When does the ... arrive? *mata tusal il ...*

What is the fare to ...? *cham il tathkara li ...*

Which bus/taxi goes to ...? *ai bas/tax yrouH il ...*

Does this bus/taxi go to ...? *Hathal bas yrouH il ...*

How many buses go to ...? *cham bas yrouH li ...*

How long does the trip take? *cham sa'aa al-riHla?*

Please tell me when we get to ... *lau samaHtit goul li mata nosal li ...*

Stop here, please. Please wait for me. *'ogaf hina, lau samaHt lau samaHt, intethernee*

May I sit here? *mumkin ag'id hina?*

May we sit here? *mumkin nag'id hina?*

1st class *daraja oola*

2nd class *daraja thaniya*

ticket *al-tathkara*

to ... *ee/a ...*

from ... *min ...*

Private Transport

I'd like to hire a ... *ana abga/(abee) ajar ... (Kuwait & Bahrain)*

Where can I hire a ...? *wayn mumkin ajar ...? bisklet/dakaja*

camel	jamal
car	sayyara
car baby seat	kursi sayyara leel tefl
donkey	Hmaar
4WD	'four wheel'
horse	Hsaan
motorcycle	motosikl
tour guide	daleel seeyaHe/ murshid seeyaHe

Is this the road to ...?

Hal Hatha al-tarig eela ...?

Where's a service station?

wayn maHattet el-betrol/al-benzeen?

Please fill it up.

min fadhlak fawell Ha

I'd like ... litres.

abga/(abee) ... leeter (Kuwait & Bahrain)

diesel

deezel

leaded petrol

betrol bil rasas

unleaded petrol

betrol khali mina rasas

I need a mechanic.

ana abga mekaneeki

The car won't start.

el-sayyara ma bet door

I have a flat tyre.

nzel el-doolab

I've run out of petrol.

khalas el-betrol/al-benzeen

I've had an accident.

ana a'malt Hads



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Middle East Phrasebook

Glossary

Following is a list of some unfamiliar words and abbreviations you might meet in the text. For a list of common foods you may encounter, see 'Eat Your Words' in the Food & Drink chapter (p88).

abeyya – woman's full-length black robe; also *abaya*
abra – water taxi
agal – black head-rope used to hold a *guttra* in place; also *igal*
ardha – traditional Bedouin dance
attar – rosewater
azan – call to prayer

bachoor – incense (Saudi Arabia)
badghir – wind tower
barasti – traditional Gulf method of building palm-leaf houses; name of the house itself
barjeel – wind tower
Bedouin – (pl Bedu) a nomadic desert dweller
beit ash-sha'ar – Bedouin goat-hair tent
bijou – service taxi
bukhnoq – girl's head covering
burda – traditional Qatari cloak
burj – tower
burka – see *hejab*

caravanserai – travellers' inn, usually constructed on main trade routes; also *khan*
compound – residential area of expats, usually with high security (Gulf States)
corniche – seaside road

dalla – traditional copper coffeepot
dhow – traditional Arab boat rigged with a lateen (triangular) sail; also *sambuq* or *sambuk*
dishdasha – man's long shirt-dress
diwan – Muslim meeting room or reception room
diwaniya – gatherings, usually at someone's home

eid – Islamic feast
Eid al-Adha – Feast of Sacrifice marking the pilgrimage to Mecca
Eid al-Fitr – Festival of Breaking the Fast, celebrated at the end of Ramadan
emir – literally 'prince'; Islamic ruler, military commander or governor

falaj – traditional irrigation channel
fatwa – religious edict issued by Islamic clerics/scholars
funduq – hotel; also *fondouk*

GCC – Gulf Cooperation Council; members are Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, Oman and the UAE
gebel – see *jebel*
guttra – white head-cloth worn by men in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States; also *shemaag*

haj – annual Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca; one of the Five Pillars of Islam
halal – literally 'permitted'; describes food permitted to Muslims including animals slaughtered according to the prescribed Islamic customs; also *halaal*
hammam – bathhouse
haram – literally 'forbidden'; anything forbidden by Islamic law; also prayer hall
harem – women of the household
hawaja – a term for Westerner
hejab – woman's head scarf or veil, worn for modesty
Hejira – Islamic calendar; Mohammed's flight from Mecca to Medina in AD 622

iftar – the breaking of the day's fast during Ramadan
ilaga – silver, feminine version of an *agal*
imam – preacher or prayer leader; Muslim cleric
insha'alla – 'If Allah wills it'; 'God willing'
iqama – residence permit and identity document (Saudi Arabia)

jalabiyya – see *galabiyya*
jambiya – tribesman's ceremonial dagger (Yemen and southern Saudi Arabia)
jamrah – pillars
jebel – hill, mountain; also *jabal*, *gebel*
jihad – literally 'striving in the way of the faith'; holy war
jizari – people of the Gulf

Kaaba – the rectangular structure at the centre of the Grand Mosque in Mecca (containing the Black Stone) around which haj pilgrims circumbulate; also *Kabaa* and *Qaaba*
khan – see *caravanserai*
khanjar – tribal curved dagger; also *khanja* (Oman and southern Saudi Arabia)
khareef – southeast monsoon, from mid-June to mid-September in Oman
khor – rocky inlet or creek
kilim – flat, woven mat
kohl – eyeliner
Koran – see *Quran*
Kufic – type of highly stylised old Arabic script
kuma – Omani cap

madhalla – ‘witch’s hat’ worn by female Hadramawt herders (Yemen)
madrassa – Muslim theological seminary; also modern Arabic word for school
mafraj – (pl mafarej) ‘room with a view’; top room of a tower house (Yemen)
majlis – formal meeting room; also parliament
mandoos – Omani wooden chest
manzar – attic; room on top of a tower house (Yemen)
mashrabiyya – ornate carved wooden panel or screen; feature of Islamic architecture
masjid – mosque
medina – city, town, especially the old quarter
midan – city or town square
mihrab – niche in a mosque indicating the direction of Mecca
mina – port
minaret – mosque tower
minbar – pulpit used for sermons in a mosque
misbah – prayer beads
muezzin – cantor who sings the call to prayer
mutawwa – religious police charged with upholding Islamic orthodoxy (Saudi Arabia)

Nabataeans – ancient trading civilisation based around Petra in Jordan

oud – wood incense chips; also a stringed musical instrument

qat – mildly narcotic plant, the leaves of which are chewed
qawha – coffee

Ramadan – Muslim month of fasting; one of the Five Pillars of Islam
ras – cape or headland; also head

sabkha – soft sand with a salty crust
sadu – Bedouin-style weaving

salat – prayer; one of the Five Pillars of Islam
sambuq – see dhow; also *sambuk*
shahada – the profession of faith that Muslims publicly declare in every mosque, five times a day; one of the Five Pillars of Islam
shai – tea
sharia – street
Sharia’a – Islamic law
sheesha – water pipe used to smoke tobacco; also *nargileh* or hubble-bubble
sheikh – head of a tribe; religious leader; also shaikh
Shiite – one of the two main branches of Islam
souq – market
stele – (pl stelae) stone or wooden commemorative slab or column decorated with inscriptions or figures
sultan – absolute ruler of a Muslim state
Sunni – one of the two main branches of Islam
suras – chapters of the Quran

tatrees – traditional Bahrani embroidery
tawaf – circling required during the pilgrimage to Mecca
thobe – men’s floor-length shirt-dress similar to a *dishdasha*, but more fitting; also *thawb*

umrah – Islamic ritual performed outside of *haj*; literally ‘little pilgrimage’

wadi – valley or river bed, often dry except after heavy rainfall
Wahhabi – conservative and literalist 18th-century Sunni orthodoxy prevailing throughout Saudi Arabia and Qatar
wali – regional head in Oman, similar to mayor
wusta – influence gained by way of connections in high places

yashmak – veil

zakat – the giving of alms; one of the Five Pillars of Islam

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