

HOW TO GET SETTLED IN  
THE KINGDOM OF BAHRAIN

SOME PRACTICAL INFORMATION

**WELCOME ON BOARD!**



## **WELCOME ON BOARD!**

Getting settled in a foreign country usually involves a number of administrative tasks.

In this booklet, we have assembled some practical information, which might be useful to you as you are planning your move to the Kingdom of Bahrain. We have put this together with the help of other colleagues, who have recently made the move from abroad and who wanted to share their knowledge in order to make your experience a successful one.

Should you require any further information, do not hesitate to contact our HR Department (direct dial +973 17222395- 17201444).

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## Physical Characteristics

The Kingdom of Bahrain is made up of 33 islands, with an area of 707 square kilometres, is situated in the Arabian Gulf, off the east coast of Saudi Arabia. The local time is GMT + 3 hours.

The state takes its names from the largest island Manama, which is 586.5 square kilometres. It is linked by causeways to Muharraq (international airport), Sitra ((industrial area and tank-farm) and Saudi Arabia. There are numerous other tiny islands but they are mainly uninhabited and are best known for the variety of migrating birds which pass through in spring and autumn.

Arabic is the official language, although English is widely understood and it's used by most businesses.

Islam is the religion of Bahrain and is practiced by a large majority. Places of worship of other faiths exists on the island.

The climate is hot in summer and mild in winter. From November to April is very pleasant, with temperatures from 15 to 24 degrees centigrade. Temperatures are coolest between December and March when northerly winds prevail. From July to September temperatures average 36 degrees centigrade with high humidity.

The annual average rainfall is approximately 77 millimetres.

The Arabian Gulf has an average depth of only 35 meters and most of it is in the vicinity of Bahrain is much shallower than this.

## Government

H.H. The Amir, Shaikh Hamad Bin Isa Al Khalifa, came to power on the 6<sup>th</sup> of March 1999, following the death of the late Amir. His Highness the Amir Shaikh Hamad Bin Isa Al Khalifa has continued in steering the country towards prosperity, glory and success. Evidence of the achievement are found in every sector of the economy and is a source of pride and inspiration.



The country is widely respected by the International community for its progressive policies and programs, thanks to the judicious leadership of His Highness and his wise government, led by His Highness Shaikh Khalifa Bin Sulman Al Khalifa, the Prime Minister and the continuous support of His Highness Shaikh Shaikh Sulman Bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince and Commander-in-Chief of the Bahrain Defense Force.

Apart from providing a stable government, it has been an active policy to encourage foreign investment and support private enterprise.

Bahrain has an independent legal and judicial system with a framework of commercial laws and, on this strength and its well developed infrastructure, has become an international and GCC arbitration center.

## Geography



Bahrain, an archipelago of 33 islands, with a total land area in excess of 700 sq. kms. Its name is derived from two Arabic words 'thnain Bahr' meaning 'two seas' and refers to the phenomenon of sweet water springs under the sea which mingle with the salty water. This phenomenon is believed to be responsible for the unusual luster of Bahrain's natural pearls, the country's main economy before the advent of oil. In addition, the land was once blessed with a remarkable number of natural springs which irrigated the fertile north and western belts for centuries. The central area is now low lying and barren limestone rock covered with saline sand, which supports only hardiest desert vegetation. The highest point of Bahrain is the Jebel Dukhan, 134 meters above the sea level. The majority of Bahrain's oil wells are in this area. The country offers a fascinating blend of eastern and western cultures as high rise buildings such as the Bahrain Financial Harbour, World Trade Centre Towers, etc vie for space with more traditional dwellings and ancient traditions and historical sites mix with modern developments and cosmopolitan living. Bahrain's population of around 600,000 consists of a significant percentage of expatriates from all over the world. Locals and expatriates live together and interact in a bond of fraternity and brotherhood. Such charms, along with an excellent network of hotels, apartments and restaurants, attract an increasing number of regional and international tourists.

## History

Bahrain is rich in history and ancient civilisations have only recently been discovered by international archaeologists. It is believed that for tens of thousands of years, nomads travelled over Bahrain's desert and primitive flint tools found, testify to this history. Recent finds have provided evidence that Bahrain was indeed the site of the lost civilisation of Dilmun dating from the third millennium BC, often referred to as the land fabled Garden of Eden and described as 'paradise' in the Epic of Gilgamesh. The land is repeatedly mentioned in Sumerian, Babylonian and Assyrian inscriptions as an important seaport between Mesopotamia and the Indus Valley, due to the perennial abundance of sweet water. By 600BC, Bahrain was absorbed into the new Babylonian Empire and once again flourished as a prosperous entrepôt. In 323BC, two of 'Alexander the Great's' ships arrived and new trade routes opened, resulting in such a strong Greek influence that Dilmun was renamed Tylos. Bahrain was also the site of the prehistoric cemetery in the world. At one stage an estimated 170,000 burial mounds covered the central and western areas. Archaeological finds of those that have been uncovered, reveal evidence of two distinct civilisations the Dilmun and Tylos – two thousand years apart, dating from the third and first millennia.



### Commercial Hours

The working week, number of hours worked and timing vary considerably. Here are the main commercial hours:

- Government offices: 07.00 -14.15 Sunday to Thursday
- Commercial organizations: Hours vary but 08.00 -15.30 or 08.00 -13.00 and 15.00 – 17.30 are common. Five day weeks are becoming favoured though many establishments still work Sunday to Thursday.
- Shops and supermarkets: Many open 08.30-12.30, 15.30-23.00 six days a week. Markets and shops open Friday mornings (times vary)
- Commercial Banks: 07.30-12.00 Sunday to Thursday, and for many branches, 15.30-17.30 on the same afternoons, 07.30-11.00 Thursdays. HSBC open their Adliya branch from 07.30 to 19.30 seven days a week.

During the holy month of Ramadhan, which precedes Eid-Al-Fitr, when Muslims fast during the daylight hours business life slows measurably and Muslim employees are allowed shorter working hours than normal.

### Residence Permits

In order to receive a residency permit for foreigners, you must submit your original Passport & other documentation to our Public Relations Officer (PRO) on the first day joining the office, & the other documentation as below:

- Registration of the home lease agreement in the Ministry of Electricity (if the bills are paid by you)
- Municipality certificate (if electricity and water bills are paid by your landlord)
- Latest electricity bill, letter and CPR card from a friend or relative if you decide to reside with them.
- Completion of medical examination report

The above submission will enable the issuance of the residency permit and a CPR (Temporary population ID card).( this process will take around 7 days)

If your family is joining you then the PRO will only submit documentation to the Immigration Authorities **after your residency permit has been processed.**

The CPR card is the most frequently required identification and you need to produce it for any transactions, guarantees, medical centres, hospitals etc. You need to ensure that you carry your CPR card with you at all times.

### **Work Permits**

All non-Bahraini/GCC nationals require a valid work permit to work in the Kingdom of Bahrain.

The PRO will apply for the work permits through the LMRA (Labour Market Regulatory Authority) by submitting an application form and clear copies of your passport.

Once this has been obtained, the PRO will then apply for the No Objection Certificate (NOC). This process can take between two-three weeks.

Please be aware, that any misuse of work permits can result in legal persecution and punishment.

### **Taxation**

Bahrain is a tax-free country and you will not be required to pay any taxes to the Government.

## Social Security

The PRO will take care of your registration with the Social Security Department by submitting the following documents:

- a) Application form signed by employer and employee
- b) Copy of passport (details, entry stamp and residency permit pages)
- c) Copy of the CPR card

Once you are registered at the Department of Social Security, the firm pays an amount of 6% of the basic salary to the Department of Social Security. No deductions are made from the employee's salary.

## Housing

Currently numerous apartments are available for rent because of continuous construction of buildings on the Island of Manama. There are a limited number of 1 bedroom apartments available.

Ways to find real estate information:

- Contact all the estate agents who are attached to your 'Welcome' letter as these have been recommended by previous employees.
- Via your HR department, where some agencies regularly send faxes with their most recent opportunities.
- Advertisements in the national newspapers under the Classifieds Section.
- 'Word of mouth' in the office, your colleagues may be able to assist you.

We advise you to make an appointment 2 to 3 days in advance so that the agency can plan a visit programme according to your needs and wishes.

Current rates for the apartments of reasonable quality are;

- 1 bedroom – BD 250 – BD 350 per month**
- 2 bedroom – BD 350 – BD 450 per month**
- 3 bedroom 'villas' are usually in a compound – BD 700 upwards**

In order to establish a rental contract, you will need to pay an advance of three months rent to the landlord. The firm can assist you with an advance for this purpose as a one time financial assistance. Please speak to your HR Manager who will guide you accordingly.

Most rental contracts have the Diplomatic Clause included in them to ensure that you have the right to vacate the premises with one month's notice period. Landlords are not permitted to increase rents during the duration of the contract and only 10%

increase on the renewal is permitted. You will need to negotiate with the landlord to ensure that the municipality taxes of 10% of the monthly rental and the utility bills are included in your rent.

Accommodation is mostly available on fully furnished basis so you would not need to purchase any household furniture however should you decide to rent a semi-furnished apartment then your landlord will provide you with ACs, carpets, cooker, refrigerator and television. Furnishing a 2 bed roomed apartment would cost between 1,500 – BD 1,800 including appliances (TV, video, washing machine etc)

### Transportation

Owning a car is more or less a necessity in Bahrain. All reputed international makers are available. The Japanese cars being the most widely used. Typical prices of Japanese cars are:

	<b>1.3 to 1.6 L</b>	<b>1.8 to 2.2 L</b>
<b>New</b>	BD 4,000 – BD 5,500	BD 5,500 to BD 8,000
<b>Secondhand</b>		
2 years	BD 2,200 – BD 2,500	BD 2,200 – BD 2,500
4 years	BD 1,900 – BD 2,300	BD 2,200 – BD 2,500

Petrol is fairly cheap (**100 fils** per litre). Car maintenance would be between BD **20-40** per month depending on the engine capacity of the car.

### Driving licence

Except UK and US licenses, no other license is valid and it is necessary to either sit a driving test (based on another nation's license) or take instruction before sitting a test.

### Money & Currency



The Bahraini Dinar is linked with the US dollar at **US\$ 1 = BD 0.378** and is divided into **1000 fils**. Notes are available in the following denominations; 500 fils notes, one dinar (red), five dinars (blue), ten dinars (green) and twenty dinars (peach).

Coins come in the units of 10, 25, 50 & 100files. Money can be changed easily at any commercial bank or at one of the money changers found in the Souq, Shopping Malls and main commercial districts. There are no restrictions on the import and export of currency.

### **Credit Cards & Travellers' Cheques**

Both forms of payments are widely accepted in hotels and most business establishments, although some smaller shops may prefer to deal in cash. Though Bahrain has a very low crime rate, it is still important to note separately the serial numbers of your cheques or credit cards and the telephone numbers to call in case of loss. The following numbers should be useful in case your card/cheque is lost or stolen.

### **Bahrain Monetary Agency**

<b>Credit Cards</b>	<b>Telephone Nos</b>
American Express	17 228822
Diners Club	17 530188
Master card	17 207485
Visa	17 207485

### **Banks**

Bahrain is the financial services center of the Middle East. Utilizing sophisticated worldwide communications, it serves both a regional and international clientele and provides a complete range of financial and banking services including well-developed offshore facilities.

<b>Bank Name</b>	<b>Telephone No.</b>
Ahli United	17 210362
Bank of Bahrain And Kuwait	17 223388
Citibank	17 223344
HSBC	17 224555
Standard Chartered Bank	17 223636
National Bank of Bahrain	17 228800



## Telephones and Internet

The telephone service is commendable and a connection is usually given within 3 days of applying for a telephone. Quarterly rent for a landline is BD 1.160. Direct dialling facilities to major cities worldwide are available and rates are cheaper than most countries. Mobile phone are extremely popular and 'pay as you talk' cards (called SIMSIM are widely available). To place an order for a new landline – the following documents have to be presented to Batelco:

1. Clear copy of the CPR (Residential Customers)
2. Lease contract for hired location
3. Guarantee letter from sponsors or BD100 deposit

### Residential Broadband Packages

Type of User	Professional			Heavy		Medium		Light
Download	16MB	10MB	8MB	4MB	2MB	1MB	1MB	640KB
Upload	512kb	512kb	512kb	512kb	512kb	256kb	256kb	128kb
Threshold Limit	100 GB	80 GB	60 GB	25 GB	15 GB	8 GB	4 GB	2 GB
Throttle Speed	2 MB	2 MB	1 MB	1 MB	512 kb	256 kb	256 kb	128 kb
Registration Fees	Free	Free	Free	Free	Free	Free	Free	Free
Monthly Rental	BD 100	BD 80	BD 60	BD 30	BD 20	BD 15	BD 12	BD 10
Chatting		✓			✓		✓	✓
Web Surfing		✓			✓		✓	✓
Email		✓			✓		✓	✓
Music		✓			✓		✓	--
Video Clips		✓			✓		✓	--
Online Gaming		✓			✓		--	--
Movies		✓			✓		--	--
Video Conferencing		✓			✓		--	--
File Sharing		✓			--		--	--
Home Business "Web Hosting"		✓			--		--	--

Batelco  
P O Box 14, Manama  
Tel: 17885555



### Public Phones

Public phones are usually both coin and card operated. Pre-paid cards for various amounts can be obtained from the local cold stores, post offices or news stands.

### Cable TV

Cable TV is already installed in most apartments. The cost may be included in the monthly rent charges. Check with your landlord.

In case the cable TV is not installed, Satlink or Orbit will install the service for you within a week to a month (see "Useful Addresses").

### Social Activities

There are a wide variety of social clubs and sports facilities available in Bahrain. For sea sports enthusiasts, water skiing, sailing, diving, boating, and scuba diving facilities are available. Also there are several cinema complexes showing Western, Hindi and Arabic films.

There are no restrictions on the consumption of alcohol and tobacco. Several clubs offer membership at between BD 300 onwards per annum for family membership.

Eating out is relatively cheap, ranging from BD 10 for a quick Chinese meal for 2 to BD30 for an evening (with wine) for 2 at one of the better restaurants. A quick Indian meal/snack would cost BD 2-3 per person.

### Information

The Bahrain Tourist information can be obtained from visiting the local Tourist office in Bab-Al-Bahrain, hotel concierge or logging into the website (<http://www.bahraintourism.com>)

### Public Transportation

All public taxis in Bahrain are metered and can be available at all times, these can also be pre-booked if required.

## Sports

Bahrain has a number of sports activities range from a top of the class Golf Club at Riffa, car racing circuit at the Bahrain Circuit in Sakhir, fishing due to the shallow seas and water sports through various hotels and leisure clubs are a variety of choices for any sports enthusiast to try their skills out. During the cooler months between January to March, camping in the desert is most popular and a number of events organizers put up tents during holidays and weekends with activities to keep you occupied.

### Tennis

Bahrain Tennis Club

P.O. Box 5867  
Tel. ....  
17729561  
Fax. ....  
17729374

### Sailing

Bahrain Yacht Club

P.O. Box 5390  
Tel. ....  
17700677  
Fax. ....  
17701797

Bahrain Sailing Club

P.O. Box 11622  
Tel. ....  
17836078  
Fax. ....  
17836079

### Rugby

Bahrain Rugby Club

P.O. Box 26203  
Tel. .... 17697670



## Schools

There are various schools on the island following different curricula-USA, UK, Indian etc. The Indian school, which is recognized by the Central Board of Secondary Education, charges about BD 35 per month for the junior classes and BD 40-50 per month for the senior classes. Fees at the Sacred Heart School, which follows the London University Examination Board curriculum, are BD 300 (plus BD 75 for transportation) for the junior classes and BD 450 (plus BD 75) for the senior classes/year.

School Name	Telephone No.	Website
<i>Bahrain (American)</i>	17727828	<a href="http://www.bahr-ehs.eu.odedodea.edu">www.bahr-ehs.eu.odedodea.edu</a>
<i>Nadeen Int'l (British)</i>	17728886	<a href="http://www.bsme.org.uk/Bahrain/nadeen.htm">www.bsme.org.uk/Bahrain/nadeen.htm</a>
<i>British School</i>	17710878	<a href="http://www.bsme.org.uk/Bahrain/british.htm">www.bsme.org.uk/Bahrain/british.htm</a>
<i>St. Christopher's (British)</i>	17788108	<a href="http://www.bsme.org.uk/Bahrain/stchris.htm">www.bsme.org.uk/Bahrain/stchris.htm</a>
<i>The New Indian (Indian)</i>	17622350	<a href="http://www.newindianschool.com">www.newindianschool.com</a>
<i>Indian School Bahrain</i>	17684166	<a href="http://isba.virtualave.net/index.html">http://isba.virtualave.net/index.html</a>

## Medical Care

There are 6 hospitals on the island and medical facilities are free except of BD 3 as an entry charge in the Government hospital, which is comparable to a western public hospital. Services of private doctors and dentists are also available. In addition to this, private medical services are available at the government hospital at around BD 10 per visit. The firm provides a medical insurance with a BD 5 excess for the first consultation.

### Hospital & Clinics

Ambulance Emergency	999
American Mission Hospital	17 253447
Saar Medical & Dental Clinic	17 790025
Awali Hospital	17 753333
Bahrain Specialist Hospital	17 812000
International Hospital	17 591666

Dr Tariq's Medical Centre	17 251717
Gulf Dental Hospital	17 741444
Ibn Al-Nafees Hospital	17 828282
Salmaniya Hospital	17 255555

## **USEFUL ADDRESSES**

### **Moving:**

Gulf Agency Co. (Bahrain) w.l.l.  
P.O.Box-412, Manama, Kingdom Of Bahrain  
Phone : 00973-17-814500 / Fax :00973-17-827928

Al Mulla Cargo W.l.l.  
P O Box 1644, Manama, Kingdom of Bahrain  
Phone: 00 973 292924/Fax 00 973 17291582

### **Insurance**

Gulf Union Insurance & Reinsurance Co. BSC  
P O Box 10949  
Manama 356, Kingdom of Bahrain  
Phone : 00 973-17255292/ Fax : 00 973 17255090

Norwich Union Insurance (Gulf) BSC  
P O Box 45, Manama, Kingdom of Bahrain  
Phone : 00 973 17588222/Fax : 00 973 17583050

### **Real Estate Agencies**

Century 21 Bahrain Properties  
P O Box 424, Manama, Kingdom of Bahrain  
Phone: 00 973 17212000/Fax: 00 973 17228440

Remax Bahrain w.l.l.  
P O Box 30277, Juffair, Kingdom of Bahrain  
Phone: 00 973 17813666/Fax: 00 973 17813600

### **Travel Agents**

Dadabhai Travel  
P O Box 387, Manama, Kingdom of Bahrain  
Phone: 00 973 17227676/Fax: 17210191

**24 hour chemists**

Jaffar Pharmacy. Phone: +973 17 291039  
Nasser Pharmacy. Phone: +973 17 740900  
Al Attar Pharmacy. Phone: +973 17 717231  
Awal Pharmacy: Phone; +973 17 772023

**Car Hire**

Oscar Rent A Car  
P.O. Box 11881  
Tel. .... 17742742  
Fax. .... 17742121

Ramada Car Hiring - Buying & Selling  
P.O. Box 2452  
Tel. .... 17251637  
Fax. .... 17276887

Oscar Rent A Car  
P.O. Box 11881  
Tel. .... 17742742  
Fax. .... 17742121

**General Information for Foreigners**

The Bahrain Directory is now available on the website: [www.theBahrain.com](http://www.theBahrain.com)



### Electricity and water

The monthly electricity bill for a 2 bedroom flat ranges from **BD 5** in winter to **BD 25** in summer, when air conditioners run practically continuously. Voltage is 240 AC and plugs are British type

Your landlord and your estate agent will guide you on the process for registration for the Electricity and Water.

### Cooking Gas

It is very cheap and immediate home delivery is available. Several companies of the island supply cooking gas. A cylinder containing 50lbs costs BD 2.500 plus a refundable deposit.

### ***Important Phone Numbers***

Ambulance/Fire/Police	999
Traffic and Accidents	17688888
Electricity	17241111
Water	17727500
Drainage	17783711
Flight Information	17339339

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Example of a weekly shopping: - (sources Gulf weekly news)

<b>Mega Mart, Manama</b>	
Milk (Al Marai, 2ltrs)	0.850
Bread (Al Matrood white bread)	0.275
Sugar (SIS Pure sugarcane, 2kg)	0.795
Coffee (Nescafe Gold, 100gms)	2.025
Tea (Lipton tea, 100 bags)	1.380
Eggs (Saudi eggs, six)	0.300
Rice (Tilda Basmati, 5kg)	3.995
Pasta (Italian Spaghetti, 453gms)	0.280
Chicken Breasts (Sadia, 450gms)	0.875
Tomatoes (1kg)	0.300
Apples (Chile Apples, 1kg)	0.650
Cheese (Chesdale cheddar, 12 slices)	0.640
Orange Juice (Al Nada, 2ltrs)	0.700
Cooking Oil (Afia Corn Oil, 2ltrs)	1.370
Cornflakes (Kellogs, 375gms)	1.095
Water (Arwa bottled water, 500ml x 12)	0.700
Napkins (Kleenex, 90 sheets)	0.475
Soap (Dove cream bar, 75gms)	0.225
Chocolate (Cadbury's Dairy Milk, 100gms)	0.420
Carrots (1kg)	0.400
Potatoes (1kg)	0.350
<b>Grand Total:</b>	<b>BD18.220</b>

**PUBLIC HOLIDAYS**

- ④ New Year (1day)
- ④ Eid Al-Fitr (3 days)
- ④ Eid Al-Adha (3 days)
- ④ Islamic New Year “Al-Hijra” (1 day)
- ④ Ashura (2 days)
- ④ Milad Al-Nabi (1 day)
- ④ Bahrain National Day (2 days)

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