



ALDENHAM
RIYADH

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Welcome to Aldenham School Riyadh

2026-27



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Welcome Message

We are very happy to welcome you to Aldenham, a community built on a tradition of excellence, innovation and a commitment to enhancing children's passion to learn. As a valued member of our staff, you are now part of an environment that celebrates both academic achievement and personal growth, fostering a culture where students and staff alike can thrive.

At Aldenham, we hold ourselves to the highest standards, striving to provide an exceptional education that nurtures curiosity, resilience and integrity. Our success is driven by the dedication, talent and passion of our staff, and we are confident that your skills and contributions will enhance our vibrant school community.

This welcome booklet has been designed to help you settle in quickly into life in Riyadh. Whether you are in the classroom, or at home, feeling settled in a new environment is just as important as your new role. We hope this booklet will answer questions you may have and help you feel more comfortable as you find your way around Riyadh (and Aldenham).

We hope you find your time here both fulfilling and inspiring. Our community is here to support you every step of the way, so please don't hesitate to reach out to us if you have any questions or need guidance.

Thank you for joining us in our mission to provide an extraordinary education.

Welcome to the Aldenham family. We are excited to have you on board.

What to Expect

Riyadh, the capital of Saudi Arabia, is a vibrant city that blends traditional Islamic values with modern development. Its culture is deeply rooted in Arab traditions and Islamic principles, which influence daily life, social norms, and the city's architecture. Islam is central to Riyadh's culture, with daily prayers, Islamic holidays and mosques playing a significant role in public life. Traditional clothing, such as the Thobe for men and Abaya for women, is widely worn. In recent years, wearing these items of clothing is not enforced, however, the general etiquette is to make sure your clothes cover your shoulders and knees and clothing is loose.

Hospitality is a cornerstone of Saudi culture. Guests are warmly welcomed, often with Arabic coffee (qahwa) and dates as a gesture of generosity. Riyadh's food scene is a mix of traditional Saudi dishes, like kabsa (spiced rice with meat) and international cuisines reflecting its diverse population. Pork is not eaten, but a variety of other meats are available.

In recent years, Riyadh has embraced more public events, hosting cultural events, concerts and festivals such as Riyadh Season. There are theme parks, water parks, many shopping malls and landmarks, such as the Kingdom Tower, which showcase a blend of heritage and progress.



Before You Come to Riyadh



VPN

Although WhatsApp texting is widely used here, Saudi Arabia blocks any phone calls or video calls made through WhatsApp. Please check current local regulations and school guidance regarding communication apps and online access.



Data options

Get the Airalo app – This provides you with a data-only E-sim card on your phone – just buy a package and it will give you non-expensive data for Riyadh until you can get a more local sim card. You can buy this before you fly.

If you would prefer a physical sim card, you can get them very easily from the airport. If you do not want the stress of getting one immediately after you land, most local supermarkets also stock them.



What to Pack

Remember to read up on prohibited items to avoid bringing into the country. Also, think about buying toiletries beforehand (especially sunscreen) – as they can be quite expensive here.



International Banking

Until you can get a Saudi Bank Account, staff have found it very helpful to use an international bank account in the meantime. Online banks like Starling or Monzo have low conversion rates, no overseas fees and are widely accepted in Saudi Arabia. They can also be good mediators for transferring money internationally.



When You Land in Riyadh

It can be quite overwhelming when you land in Riyadh and leave the airport:

- **Pick-up procedure** - Our designated bus drivers will pick you up from the airport - just look for the Aldenham sign.
- **Blue-vest staff** - Airport staff members will be happy to help you with your bags but be prepared to tip with cash if you would like their help.
- **Get a Sim card** - In Saudi Arabia, you can get a data-only sim card, or a sim card with data and a phone number. If you are waiting for your Iqama to be processed (your national card), it is simpler to just get the **data-only sim card** for now.

Recommended Sim Providers



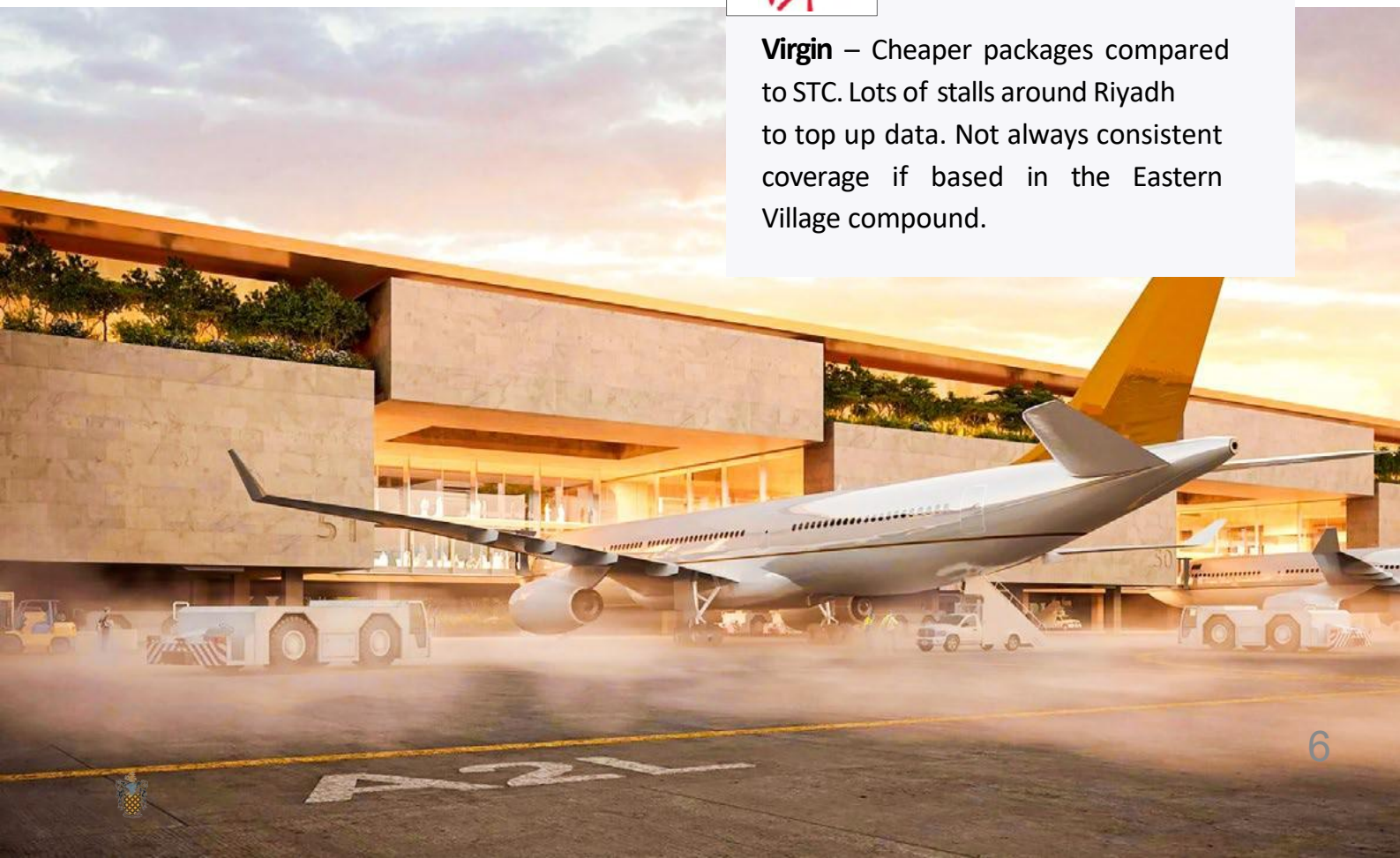
STC – One of the biggest data providers in Saudi Arabia. Good coverage, lots of plans to choose from. Lots of stalls around Riyadh to sort out additional data and Wi-Fi from. Can have quite expensive plans though.



Zain – Also a very big provider of data in Saudi Arabia. Good coverage. Not as many stalls around Riyadh if you need to top-up data.



Virgin – Cheaper packages compared to STC. Lots of stalls around Riyadh to top up data. Not always consistent coverage if based in the Eastern Village compound.



What if I can't get a Sim card?

If you do not want to pressure yourself to get a sim right off the plane, you have 2 options:

- ✓ You can purchase a SIM card from most local supermarkets and shopping malls. Supermarkets such as HyperPanda and Carrefour typically have mobile network kiosks where SIM cards can be purchased. If you are moving into Eastern Village Compound, there is a HyperPanda conveniently located nearby where you can obtain a SIM card.

Many shopping centres, including Granada Mall and Riyadh Gallery Mall, also have mobile network stalls offering SIM cards and mobile services.

Get the Airalo app (as mentioned on the 'Before you come to Riyadh' page).



What if I run out of data?

If you run out of data, you will need to go to one of the stalls in the supermarkets to top-up there. The apps will usually only accept MADA payments (Saudi Arabian bank card). Perhaps a friend can lend you their Saudi card if you cannot go to the supermarket.

Wi-Fi

If you would like Wi-Fi in your apartment, this can sometimes be a bit tricky before you receive your Iqama. Because most Wi-Fi packages are pre-paid (direct debit contracts), they require your iqama to link everything together, as well as a Saudi Bank Card.

However, some wi-fi providers may offer a post-paid service, where you can pay month-by-month. Doing it this way means that you will need to go to a stall and pay the bill month-by-month until you can get a Saudi Bank Card and pay on the app. Most people find that the data mobile packages have plenty of data on there so Wi-Fi isn't essential. If you are bringing a desktop PC or gaming console, then Wi-Fi may be necessary or you can try to hotspot. If this is what you need, we recommend going to an STC stall in Grenada Mall to get a 5G router.

International Staff Accommodation

Accommodation is provided within **Eastern Village**, a secure residential compound designed for international staff relocating to Saudi Arabia.

Accommodation Overview

- ✓ Fully furnished apartments
- ✓ Single staff and couples welcome
- ✗ Children are not permitted in the accommodation
- ✓ 24/7 gated security and support

Community Expectations

- Respect neighbours and shared spaces
- Follow safety and security procedures
- Adhere to guest and smoking policies

Need Help?

HR and Facilities teams are available to support you throughout your relocation and settlement journey.

Compound Facilities

-  Swimming Pools
-  Gym & Fitness Centre
-  Padel & Sports Courts
-  Football & Multi-Use Sports Areas
-  Walking & Running Tracks
-  BBQ & Social Spaces

Compound Details

- [Location](#)
- [Phone](#)
- [Email](#)
- [Pictures](#)



Dress Code

Our Standard

All staff are expected to maintain a professional appearance that reflects the values, culture, and ethos of Aldenham Riyadh.

Male Staff

- Formal shirt and tie
- Tailored trousers
- Formal black or brown shoes
- Jacket required for formal occasions
- Neat hair and professional grooming
- Minimal jewellery; no visible piercings or tattoos

Female Staff

- Business attire (suits, tailored dresses, or professional separates)
- Tailored trousers, skirts, or dresses of appropriate length
- Formal footwear
- Jacket required for formal occasions
- Minimal jewellery; no visible piercings or tattoos

General Guidelines

- ☐ All staff attire must be clean, neat and appropriate for their professional responsibilities.
- ☐ Cultural sensitivity is paramount, and staff should ensure their attire reflects the values and ethos of Aldenham School Riyadh.
- ☐ The Headmaster or Senior Leadership Team reserves the right to address concerns regarding staff dress and provide guidance as necessary.



Weather in Riyadh



Winter (Nov-Feb)

Mild and pleasant, with cool nights. Day time temperatures average 15–25°C (59–77°F), but nights can drop to as low as 5°C (41°F) in January. Occasional rain occurs.



Spring (Mar-May)

Warm to hot, with increasing temperatures. Day time highs range from 25–40°C (77– 104°F) by late spring. Sandstorms are more common during this time.



Summer (Jun-Oct)

Extremely hot and dry. Daytime temperatures regularly exceed 45°C (113°F), with little relief at night. Humidity remains low, and rainfall is rare.

Cost of Living

Day-To-Day

If you're coming from the UK, grocery prices are around 30% higher in Riyadh. This can vary with other countries. However, other things can be much cheaper. If you're after imported items, this will be quite high, but you will also find that more local produce (especially fruit) has much more variety and less cost. Cereal and toiletries seem to have the highest mark-up here so if you are not sure what to bring with you, bring those.

General bills for electric, gas and water come to around 100 SAR per month.

Leisure

Leisure activities can also vary significantly. Because of Riyadh's recent introduction into bigger events like concerts, F1, WWE, etc., quite a lot of these tickets will have a lower price to encourage people to come. A recent example is that a 3-day concert ticket was around 200 SAR.

Getting around Riyadh

There are not a lot of pavements in Riyadh, and it is usually too hot to walk so getting taxis are the way to go. Even for a short journey across the road.

The Uber logo, consisting of the word "Uber" in white sans-serif font on a black square background.

Uber – For the most safety features, and different ride options (such as saver, comfort and car share). Average taxi fares cost anywhere from as little as 10 SAR for a 5 minute journey.

The Careem logo, featuring the word "Careem" in white sans-serif font on a green square background.

Careem – For Taxis and food delivery

The Bolt logo, featuring the word "Bolt" in a bold, green, sans-serif font.

Bolt - Another taxi option



Getting around Riyadh: RPT

The RPT (Riyadh Public Transport) is also an option; even more exciting now that Riyadh Metro is open as of December 2024.

Introducing... Darb

Download the Darb app for all your metro and bus needs, including maps and tickets.



Current prices for the Metro

Standard Class:

Two-hour pass: SR4

3-day pass: SR20

7-day pass: SR40

30-day pass: SR140

First Class

Two-hour pass: SR10

3-day pass: SR50

7-day pass: SR100

30-day pass: SR350



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Apps to download: Delivery

Almost anything can be delivered to you in Riyadh; takeaway, grocery shopping, electronics, furniture etc. Here are some of the best and most common apps to use:



Noon : Almost anything can be found on here to be delivered in as little as 15 minutes. This can include electronics, pharmaceuticals, clothes, stationery etc.



Hunger station : one of the best, most diverse Food delivery apps in Riyadh. You can order grocery shopping or takeout from here.



Ninja : Similar to Noon but cheaper. Have deliveries in as little as 30 minutes. Often has things Noon does not.



Farm : For fresh, health-conscious food grocery deliveries



Amazon : quick deliveries within a few days



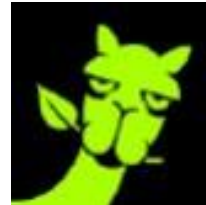
Apps to download: Delivery



Calo: For meal kits – breakfast, lunch or dinner. Can be tailored to your dietary needs and can be ordered weekly, monthly or longer.



ClicFlyer: For comparisons of online deals at grocery stores/ electronic sellers



Nana: Another food/household essentials delivery app



Barakah: A bit like 'Too Good to Go'. Low-cost meals to help eliminate food waste.



Right bite: Similar to Calo



Apps to download: Leisure



Nofomo: For all the latest events happening in Riyadh from concerts to local cultural events.



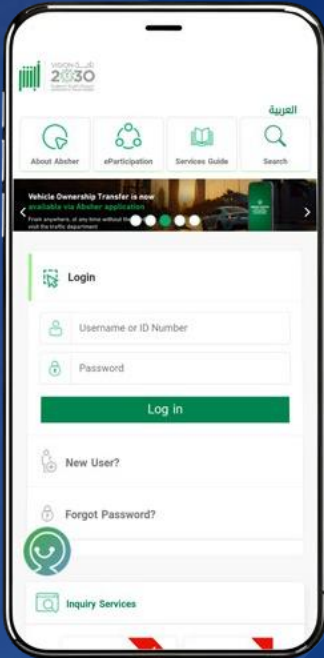
We book: Also for fun events happening in Riyadh – you can buy your tickets from this site. Very good for Boulevard World.



Get your Guide: For exploring Riyadh – or any other country for that matter! Great options with trusted tour guides to take you around and explore the area. We book – Also for fun events happening in Riyadh – you can buy your tickets from this site. Very good for Boulevard World.

Apps to download: Administrative

There is a lot to wrap your head around in Riyadh. Here's a concise list of most apps you will need during your time here.



Absher : for all your online Saudi documents including Iqama, certain visas, government appointments, driving license and government payments. You will need this app when you are setting up the final stages of your Iqama (more details further down)



Nafath : an online authenticator app – often used with bank apps and mobile providers.



SPL : similar to DHL/Evri/Post office – Helps with shipping items or receiving imported items. This app must be used to register your national address in order for you to open a bank account.

Medical Requirements

As part of your work visa application, you should have gone to a medical appointment prior to your arrival. You will also need to attend a further medical examination here in Riyadh. This will be arranged by the school, and further information will be shared with you shortly.

Your insurance policies will be sent from a member of the HR team: Ismail or Noura. If you do not receive anything, feel free to email them at HR@aldenhamprepriyadh.com or text them on **+966 59 471 8280** and they can help you.

Your medical policy will most likely be with Bupa Saudi Arabia but please check with HR about specific policies. You can also download the Bupa KSA app.



Emergency numbers



Police: 999



Ambulance: 997



Fire: 998



Traffic Emergency: 993

How does medical insurance work here?

If you have any medical issues, there are certain hospitals and facilities covered by your medical insurance.



One of the most recommended is **SMC**. There are two locations in Riyadh - one is only 10 minutes away from Eastern Village. If you download the SMC app you can book in to see any kind of specialist from cardiology to general surgery. For more general GP appointments, please check the app.



Alternatively, **Nahdi**, is an online pharmaceutical app that allows you to order some medications and book to see a GP. Check with HR to find out if they are covered in your medical insurance.

If you just need medication, there are LOTS of pharmacies around Riyadh. Often you can get the medicine you need without going through a doctor first. However, if you get medicine through SMC, the costs will be significantly subsidised because it is covered by your insurance. If you buy from a generic pharmacy the costs will be higher - on average around 100 SAR.

What about Finances?

As mentioned earlier, we highly recommend getting an international bank account like Starling or Monzo until you can set up a bank account. You cannot set up a local account until you have your Iqama which could take 1-2 months. Aldenham will transfer your salary to your preferred bank account until you can open a local account.

Opening a Bank Account

This section is only relevant once you have received your Iqama number from HR. Have you received your Iqama yet?

You can now begin the process of opening a bank account. Whilst you will not be able to open an account until you have received your physical Iqama card, completing the initial steps in advance will help to speed up the process once your card is issued.

Get a Saudi Number

If you did not get a number with your sim card, now is the time. You will need this to link to your Absher account and biometrics. Make sure they link this to your iqama number.



Biometrics

Now you can register your biometrics and Saudi phone number using an Absher kiosk (found in local supermarkets).

Register your National address

Download the SPL (Saudi Post) app and register your national address on there.



Open an account!

A highly recommended bank is SAB (HSBC). Fill out an online form for a new account and head into store to get your account and bank card!

Going on Holiday?

Exit and Re-Entry Visa

One of the excellent things about being in Saudi Arabia is how close you are to other countries! Whether its Dubai at the weekend, somewhere more exotic for half term, or back to see family in your home country, there's plenty of opportunity. However, before you leave the country you must apply for an Exit and Re-Entry Visa. This is a small document that you must apply for before you leave Saudi Arabia. This will grant you to leave Saudi Arabia and re-enter on your return. When you complete this document, **please send proof to Mr Ismail Alghamdi in HR**, as he has to approve the document on Aldenham's side, as your employer.

There are three ways of applying



If you do not have a bank account yet - talk to HR and they can issue this for you.



Apply via **Absher**



If you do have a bank account - there is an option on most banking apps about paying 'government fees'. Exit and re-entry visas should be found there.

Two types of Exit and Re-entry visas



Single exit and re-entry - just going on holiday once in the space of a few months? Get this for 200 SAR



Multiple exit and re-entry visas - going away multiple times within 3 months? Get this one for 500 SAR



Shops you need to know about



Groceries



Hyper Panda

- Large selection of local and imported products.
- Fresh meat, veg, home essentials.
- Average to high prices.
- Multiple locations all over Riyadh.
- 2 minutes away from the Eastern Village Compound.
- Available to order on Hungerstation.



Farm

- The best for good quality, fresh produce.
- Lots of healthy, natural eating options.
- Premium prices because of this.
- One store is located 5 minutes away from Aldenham.
- Not available on Hungerstation, but has its own delivery app.





Tamimi Market

- Varied prices – some things cheaper, some more expensive.
- Good selection of fruit and vegetables.
- Not available on Hungerstation



Carrefour

- Very similar to Hyper Panda but another good option.
- Often found in malls.
- Available to order on Hungerstation



Lulu

- One of the most cost-effective grocery stores.
- Better for staple/dry ingredients rather than fresh produce. Al-Othaim is also a good choice.
- Available on Hungerstation.



Spinneys

- Excellent selection of food, especially fresh food and imported items in large varieties.
- Premium prices.
- Available on Hungerstation.

Shops you need to know about

Leisure



5 Savings

The equivalent of Poundland! Everything is 5 SAR. You can get a lot of household things from here, so it is a great way to get stocked up when you first arrive. They also have stationery, food, toiletries etc. Multiple locations around Riyadh.



Azhar Albasem

Similar to 5 Savings but with different items



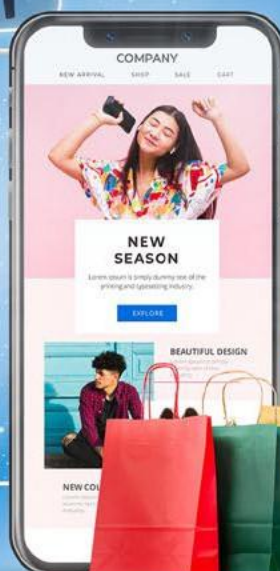
Jarir Bookstore

For books and electronics



Extra

For electronics and appliances





Key Contacts

Mark S. Bedford, Headmaster: head@aldenhamprepriyadh.com

Hina Khan, Deputy Head – Academic: HKhan@aldenhamprepriyadh.com

Crispin Cole, Deputy Head – Pastoral: CCole@aldenhamprepriyadh.com

Paul Hughes, Assistant Head – Operations & Standards: PHughes@aldenhamprepriyadh.com

Shahab Fareed, CFO: SFareed@aldenhamprepriyadh.com

Amanda Ibrahim, Registrar: registrar@aldenhamprepriyadh.com

HR: hr@aldenhamprepriyadh.com

IT Support: ITSupport@aldenhamprepriyadh.com

Thank You

Thank you for choosing to be part of our team and embarking on this exciting journey in Riyadh. We understand that relocating and adjusting to a new environment can be both challenging and rewarding. Your willingness to embrace new experiences, adapt to cultural differences and contribute your talents to Aldenham School Riyadh is greatly appreciated.

As you settle in, know that your well-being and success are important to us, and we are here to support you every step of the way.

For any further questions, please feel free to get in touch with our HR department, HR@aldenhamprepriyadh.com.

Aldenham School Riyadh



[Location](#)