



# Hofuf

Photo: kv naushad/Shutterstock.com

Nestled within the lush Al-Ahsa Oasis in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia, the city of Al Hofuf (also known as Al-Ahsa or Al-Hasa) sprawls over the palm-tree covered lands inhabited since prehistoric times. Al Hofuf is packed with historic sites, architectural monuments, and natural wonders, from forts and palaces to the whimsical Qara Mountain Caves and natural springs.



Zhukov Oleg/Shutterstock.com



Alexandra Lande/Shutterstock.com



Volodymyr Burdiak/Shutterstock.com

## Featured

## Top 5



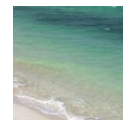
### Qaisariah Souq

The Qaisariah Souq is a cultural attraction just as much as a shopping venue...



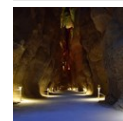
### Al Ahsa National Park

The National Park is a beautiful green oasis located in the area of Umran, i...



### Uqair Beach

An hour long train ride east from the Hofuf railway station is the ancient f...



### Al-Qara Caves

The extraordinary rock formations and caves of Al-Qara are, perhaps, the mos...

### Ibrahim Palace

A monument of Ottoman architecture, the palace is an ancient fort with walls built from then-common materials of mud and



## THE CITY



Araheem67 (image cropped)

Al-Ahsa Oasis containing the city of Hofuf boasts a staggering estimate of one and a half million date palm trees, which has turned Hofuf into a leading producer of dates worldwide. The abundance of this sweet fruit isn't its only pride - Al-Ahsa has been inhabited from time immemorial due to its relatively favorable climate and abundance of natural water springs (Al-Jawhariah, Al-Khodoud and Um Sabah, as well as the Al-Harah hot springs), and traces of ancient life can still be seen in the archaeological sites scattered throughout the oasis.

Some of the area's main attractions include the mysterious mountain caves of Qara, Ibrahim Palace (the province's main administrative center and architectural monument), the historic Al-Qaisariyah Market (one of the finest souks in the Kingdom) and Al-Ahsa National Park. Hofuf is located only an hour-long train ride away from the coastal town of Uqair known for its pristine beach, which makes for a perfect weekend seaside getaway.

## DO & SEE



Sergei25/Shutterstock.com

The Al-Ahsa Oasis (Asia's largest) is an attraction of its own - the area has recently been nominated to officially become one of the Seven Wonders of the World due to its unique position at the crossroads of historic trade routes and natural diversity. A great way to get a bird's eye view of the oasis is to climb the Qara Mountain (do not miss the famous Qara Caves en route), from where the incredible sight of hundreds of thousands of date palms unfolds. In Hofuf, the must-dos are the authentic, well-preserved Qaisariah Souq, Ibrahim Palace and (for history buffs) the Al-Ahsa Museum for Antiquities and Heritage.

### Qaisariah Souq



The Qaisariah Souq is a cultural attraction just as much as a shopping venue - the souq is well-preserved to reflect the spirit of ancient times, Arabic architecture and traditional markets. Vendors sell all manner of things (fabrics, crafts, spices, etc.) in the unique, old-time atmosphere of the souq.

Photo: SABPICS/Shutterstock.com

Address: King Abdul Aziz, Hofuf



### Al Ahsa National Park



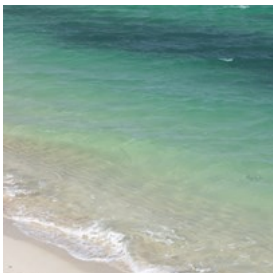
The National Park is a beautiful green oasis located in the area of Umran, in close proximity to the Qara Mountain.

Originally planned to prevent desert sands being blown into the city of Umran, the park has now transformed into a family-friendly green destination. The park welcomes visitors to its green spaces, playgrounds, recreation areas and even swimming pools all through the day.

Photo: Zurijeta/Shutterstock.com

Address: Al Ahsa National Park, Al Umran, Eastern Province, Saudi Arabia

### Uqair Beach



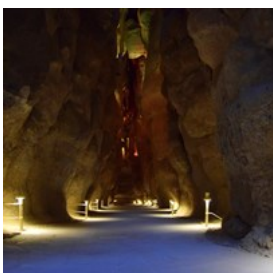
An hour long train ride east from the Hofuf railway station is the ancient fort of Uqair and Uqair Beach - a stretch of land perfectly fit for a

beach day trip from Hofuf. There is little infrastructure in the area, so prepare everything you may need in advance - including swimming gear and snacks.

Photo: Paul Cowan/Shutterstock.com

Address: Uqair, Saudi Arabia

### Al-Qara Caves



The extraordinary rock formations and caves of Al-Qara are, perhaps, the most prominent landmark of the region and deserve a day trip of their own.

Wandering through the maze is pleasant any time of year - the caves stay cool during summer,

warm throughout the winter months and the mountaintop offer unobstructed views of the beautiful palm oasis beneath. The legend has it, these caves is where Judas ended his life after the biblical betrayal.

Photo: Photos by Ava Kabouchy/Shutterstock.com

Address: Al Qarah, Eastern Province, Saudi Arabia

### Ibrahim Palace

A monument of Ottoman architecture, the palace is an ancient fort with walls built from then-common materials of mud and straw. There is a small museum of Ottoman artifacts and a mosque on its premises, and the palace is open to visitors all days of the week.

Address: King Faisal Road, Hofuf

## DINING



wong yu liang/Shutterstock.com

Grains such as wheat or rice and meats, such as chicken or lamb constitute the bulk of Saudi cuisine--pork is not normally served in the country, as its consumption is forbidden by Islam. Yoghurt is often used in local cooking, and dates constitute a dessert staple. A "Kabsa" dish made up of rice, fish, and shrimp is typical of the area. There is no shortage of restaurants serving all kinds of cuisines in Hofuf; most have separate designated areas for families and singles.

## Topaz



Hofuf is not a city distinguished by a huge variety of fine dining establishments, and Topaz would certainly be a good choice for those

looking to visit a higher-end establishment. The menu is extensive and varied, and it includes Middle Eastern and international dishes.

Photo: Pille R. Priske/Unsplash

Address: Al Khalij Rd, Al Muthallath, Al Hofuf

Opening hours: Daily 12pm-1am

Phone: +966 13 580 8888

## Bharat Restaurant Indian Kitchen



Bharat is a celebrated local restaurant that serves Indian classics and is hailed as the best Indian restaurant in town.

The extensive menu

includes a variety of vegetarian and meat-based dishes (do not miss the "biryani"). The seating area ambience is pleasant, too.

Photo: Wikimediaimages/Pixabay

Address: Al Khalij Road, Al Muthallath, Hofuf

Opening hours: Sun-Wed 12pm-12am, Thu-Sat 12pm-1am

Phone: +966 13 581 1100

Internet: [www.bharat-ksa.com](http://www.bharat-ksa.com)

## Amore's



The restaurant's menu, albeit international, is heavily inspired by Italian cuisine, which shows through even in the local interpretations of the

Italian classics. The interior is elegant and understated, and a special emphasis is made on the food presentation.

Photo: MatteoPhotoPro2020/Pixabay

Address: King Fahd Rd, Al Hofuf

Opening hours: Daily 12pm-12am

Phone: +966 3 584 7777

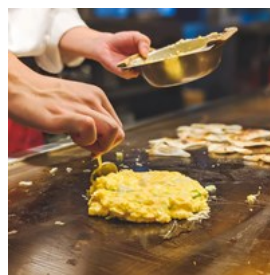
## CAFES



Zadorozhnyi Viktor/Shutterstock.com

Dates reign king in foods typical of the Eastern Province, and dishes served at Hofuf's cafes are no exception. Molasses extracted from dates are used for preparing porridge (a local diet staple). Menus of most establishments (from small locales to international chains) feature date-based desserts. Much as elsewhere in Saudi Arabia, fruit juices and smoothies are also very popular.

## Bayt Jaddi



Located not far from Hofuf Mall (at the crossing of Abu Baka as Siddiq and Kind Abdulayiy Road), this eatery is a locals' darling.

The place serves tapas-style Middle Eastern dishes and snack foods and is a popular choice for breakfast--cheese-stuffed omelettes are a big hit.

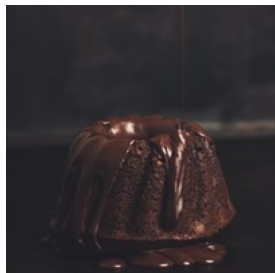
Photo: Daniel Hooper/Unsplash

Address: King Abdulaziz Road, Al Hofuf

Opening hours: Daily 4-11:30am

Phone: +966 13 586 5009

### La Terrasse Cafe



Expect a short wait to be sated at this upscale cafe, for there is often a line of repeat customers at the door. The menu is Italian-inspired, with

"risotto balls" being held in high regard by customers. Desserts are decadent--try the chocolate or date pudding.

Photo: Jordane Mathieu/Unsplash

Address: Prince Talal Bin Abdulaziz Street, Hofuf

Opening hours: Sat-Thu 8am-12am, Fri 4pm-12am

Phone: +966 54 531 5223

### Vitamin Palace



Vitamin Palace attracts visitors with its enticing display of fresh colourful fruit and offers a large variety of fruit juices and smoothies. The cafe also

offers a few meal options--traditional Arabic shawarma, sandwiches, and other dishes are available to order.

Photo: Boba Jaglicic/Unsplash

Address: Al Khalij Rd, Al Rawdha, Al Hofuf

Opening hours: Sat-Thu 10am-2am, Fri 1pm-2am

Phone: +966 13 588 2500

### BARS & NIGHTLIFE



Natalia Klenova/Shutterstock.com

The cultural environment in Saudi Arabia is highly conservative. Religious law forbids the sale or consumption of alcohol throughout Saudi Arabia, so there are no bars or nightclubs.

Instead, evening social activities are centred on shopping or dining out in one of the city's many restaurants or cafés whilst indulging in a delicious mocktail (a mix of fresh fruit juices) or a strong cup of Arabic coffee.

### SHOPPING



Laborant/Shutterstock.com

From one of Saudi Arabia's most famous historic souks to high-rise modern malls - there is no shortage of shopping opportunities in Hofuf. Locally produced products include, of course, dates and their derivatives, as well as clothing and textiles, coffee pots and jewelry. Please mind that some stores allow entry to women or families only (a sign will normally be displayed in the front window).



### Traditional Village Market



The Traditional Village Market is a shopping area with everything from clothing and jewelry to electronics and furniture on sale. Quite a few vendors sell hand-made items, carpets and various traditional crafts. There are a few cozy restaurants and cafés on site, as well as recreation and entertainment areas for kids.

Photo: Venus Angel/Shutterstock.com  
Address: Al Dawaer Al Hokomeyah District, Hofuf

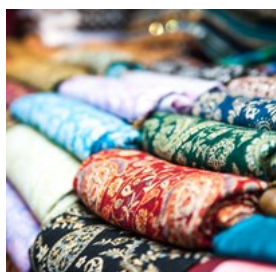
### Qaisariah Souq



The Qaisariah Souq is a cultural attraction just as much as a shopping venue - the souq is well-preserved to reflect the spirit of ancient times, Arabic architecture and traditional markets. Vendors sell all manner of things (fabrics, crafts, spices, etc.) in the unique, old-time atmosphere of the souq.

Photo: SABPICS/Shutterstock.com  
Address: King Abdul Aziz, Hofuf

### Al-Ahsa Mall



One of the several shopping malls in the area, Al-Ahsa Mall contains a large variety of shops and boutiques. Clothing, accessories, shoes, cosmetics and much more are represented by local and international brands.

Photo: Tatyana Vvc/Shutterstock.com  
Address: King Abdullah Road, Hofuf

Phone: +966 3 562 2322

### Al Othaim Mall



The family-friendly Al Othaim Mall (just a few meters away from another large shopping mall - Al Bustan) is a shopping and entertainment center offering activities such as bowling, billiards and archery alongside a large variety of local and international brand stores. The food court contains over 30 restaurants.

Photo: Naufal MQ/Shutterstock.com  
Address: Dhahran Road, Al Mubarraz  
Phone: +966 59 894 7777

## TOURIST INFORMATION



boscorelli/Shutterstock.com

### Al-Ahsa International Airport



The airport is located 17km away from the city of Hofuf. Some hotels offer private transfers/shuttles to and from the airport. When no transfer is arranged, use the taxi service at the airport (taxi stand in the city center is located next to the SAPTCO office).

Photo: Juan Garces

Address: Airport Road, Hofuf

### Saudi Arabia eVisa



Saudi Arabia introduced a new eVisa system in October 2019, dramatically simplifying visa applications for citizens of multiple world

countries, including the USA, Canada, China, Japan, Australia, and much of Europe. The new multiple-entry visa will be processed within record time (as quickly as 30 minutes), issued for one year, and will allow visitors to stay in the country for up to 90 days during its validity period. This marks a watershed moment in the country's history, as Saudi Arabia has historically been off limits to non-Muslim tourists, with visas notoriously difficult to secure.

Citizens of countries not covered by the eVisa program will still need to turn to their nearest consulate to obtain a visa.

Photo: TukTuk Design/Shutterstock.com

Internet: <https://visa.visitsaudi.com>

### Public Transport



Buses and trains run to multiple destinations throughout KSA (Dammam, Riyadh, Nairiyah and Jeddah. Al-Ahsa Station

Photo: Pierre-Luc Auclair

Address: King Fahd Road, Hofuf

Phone: +966 13 5822065

Internet: [www.saptco.com.sa](http://www.saptco.com.sa)

More Info: Government departments complex

### Taxi



The main taxi stand is located right next to the SAPTCO office in the city center.

Photo: ArrivalGuides

Address: King Faisal Road, Hofuf

### Post Office



Saudi Post - Ahsa Central Post Office

Photo: Andy Fuchs

Phone: +966 50 421 2950

Internet: [www.sp.com.sa](http://www.sp.com.sa)

More Info: Opposite Hofuf SAPTCO Station

### Pharmacy



Pharmacies can be found all throughout the city. Al-Dawaa Pharmacies: Al-Khalij Road (next to InterContinental Hotel); King Abdullah Road (next

to the Hospital);

Prince Salman Street (next to Kind Fahad Hospital)

Photo: Gemma Garner

Address: Hofuf

Internet: [www.al-dawaa.com](http://www.al-dawaa.com)

## Telephone



+966 Saudi country code  
13 Hofuf city code

Photo: Jardson Almeida

## Electricity



127/220 V, 60 Hz  
Different types of sockets  
used, travel adapter may  
be needed

Photo: Stirling Tshan

## Cultural Norms



When strolling and  
exploring the city please  
make sure you wear the  
appropriate attire.  
Women should be  
covered from neck to

ankle and in certain areas scarves are used to  
cover the face and head. Shorts and tank tops  
should not be worn outside of your  
accommodation by women. For men, loose  
clothing is recommended and shorts are  
prohibited.

When visiting, please make sure you respect and  
abide by the laws and culture of the country.

Photo: aalbedouin/Shutterstock.com

## Population

150,000 (2014)

## Currency

1 riyal (SAR) = 100 halalas

## Opening hours

The working week is generally from Sun-Thu with some  
businesses open Saturday mornings. Government Offices:  
7:30am–2:30pm. Banks: 9:30am–4:30pm. Private  
Businesses: 8am–noon and 4–8pm. Some shops close  
several times a day for half hour prayers, and often work  
"split days" closing for a few hours between noon and 4pm.

## Newspapers

Saudi Gazette  
Al Jazeera

## Emergency numbers

Emergency 999

## Tourist information

Saudi Commission for Tourism and National Heritage  
B.O.Box 66680  
Riyadh 11586  
Saudi Arabia  
Tel: +966 11 8808855

Tourism Call Center  
19988