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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.

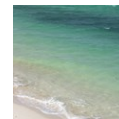
## Featured

## Top 5



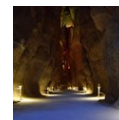
### Al Ahsa National Park

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### Uqair Beach

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### Cave at Jabal Al Qarah

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### Ibrahim Palace

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## THE CITY



*mohammad alashri/Unsplash*

Al-Ahsa Oasis, which includes the city of Hofuf, is renowned for its vast number of date palm trees, estimated at around one and a half million. This abundance has established Hofuf as a leading date producer globally. The oasis benefits from a relatively favourable climate and a network of natural water springs, such as Al-Jawhariah, Al-Khodoud, Um Sabah, and the Al-Harah hot springs. These factors have made the area a thriving settlement for centuries, with traces of ancient life visible in its numerous archaeological sites.

Key attractions in the area include the enigmatic Qara Caves, the historic Ibrahim Palace (an important administrative and architectural landmark), the historic Al-Qaisariyah Market (one of the finest souks in Saudi Arabia), and Al-Ahsa National Park.

Hofuf is also conveniently located about an hour by train from the coastal town of Uqair, known for its pristine beach, making it an ideal spot for a seaside weekend getaway.

## DO & SEE



*Sergei25/Shutterstock.com*

Al-Ahsa Oasis, the largest in Asia, is a remarkable destination in its own right. In 2018, it was nominated as a potential candidate for the New Seven Wonders of Nature due to its unique position at the crossroads of historic trade routes and its diverse natural environment. For a panoramic view of the oasis, consider climbing Qara Mountain, and be sure to explore the famous Qara Caves along the way. From the summit, you can admire the stunning sight of hundreds of thousands of date palms.

In Hofuf, don't miss visiting the authentic and well-preserved Qaisariya Souq, the historic Ibrahim Palace, and for those interested in history, the Al-Ahsa Museum for Antiquities and Heritage.

### Al Ahsa National Park



Al Ahsa National Park is a lush green oasis located in the Al Ahsa region of Saudi Arabia, near the city of Al Ahsa and in close proximity to the Qara Mountains. Originally established to combat desertification and protect the oasis from encroaching sands, the park has since evolved into a popular recreational destination. Visitors can enjoy a variety of amenities, including

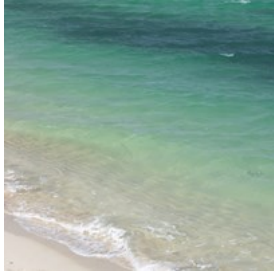
expansive green spaces, playgrounds, recreational areas, and even swimming pools all through the day.

Photo: Zurijeta/Shutterstock.com

Address: Al Ahsa National Park, Madinat al-Umran

Opening hours: Daily 6am–6pm

### Uqair Beach



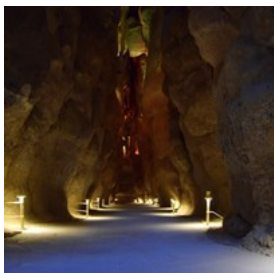
An hour-long train ride east from Hofuf Railway Station takes you to the historic fort of Uqair and Uqair Beach—a great destination for a beach

day trip from Hofuf. The area is relatively undeveloped, so it's important to prepare in advance by bringing all necessary supplies, including swimming gear, snacks, and other essentials.

Photo: Paul Cowan/Shutterstock.com

Address: Uqair, Saudi Arabia

### Cave at Jabal Al Qarah



The extraordinary rock formations and caves of Al-Qara are one of the most prominent landmarks in the Al Ahsa region and are well worth

a dedicated day trip. Exploring the maze-like caves is a pleasant experience year-round; the caves remain cool during the summer and warm in the winter. The mountaintop offers unobstructed views of the lush palm oasis below. According to local legend, these caves are associated with the story of Judas Iscariot, who is said to have ended his life here after the biblical betrayal.

Photo: Photos by Ava Kabouchy/Shutterstock.com

Address: Alqourhah, Al Hofuf

### Ibrahim Palace

Ibrahim Palace is a notable example of Ottoman architecture, characterised by its historic fortification built with traditional materials such as mud and straw. The palace features a small museum showcasing Ottoman artefacts, as well as a mosque within its grounds.

Address: King Khalid Road, Al Rafaa North, Al 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.

### 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 Khaliq 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 Khaliq 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)

## CAFÉS



Zadorozhnyi Viktor/Shutterstock.com

Dates reign king in foods typical of the Eastern Province, and dishes served at Hofuf's cafés 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.

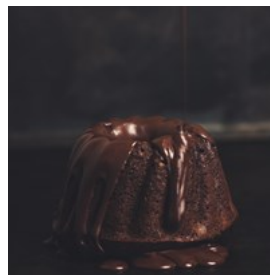
Photo: Daniel Hooper/Unsplash

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 satiated 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 jewellery. Please mind that some stores allow entry to women or families only (a sign will normally be displayed in the front window).

### Qaisariya Al-Ahsa Souq

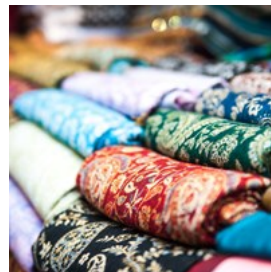


Qaisariya Al-Ahsa Souq is both a cultural attraction and a shopping destination. This well-preserved souq reflects the spirit of ancient times with its traditional Arabic architecture and market ambience. Visitors can explore a variety of vendors offering fabrics, crafts, spices, and other goods, all within the unique, historic atmosphere of the souq.

Photo: SABPICS/Shutterstock.com

Address: King Abdulaziz Road, Al 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 Vyc/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

### 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: Ali Burhan/Unsplash

### Passport/Visa

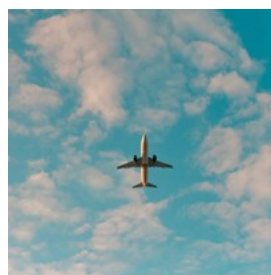


Nationals from countries such as the United States, the UK, Canada, and most European Union member states must apply for an e-visa online in order to enter Hofuf. Certain nationalities, including citizens from Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries like the UAE, Bahrain, and Kuwait, enjoy visa-free entry. For those not eligible for e-visas, Saudi Arabia offers a visa-on-arrival option for select nationalities, although this is less common and typically depends on the purpose of the visit.

To secure a visa, travellers can apply through the Saudi Arabian embassy or consulate in their home country, or use the online platform for e-visas.

Photo: ConvertKit/Unsplash

### Al-Ahsa International Airport (HOF)



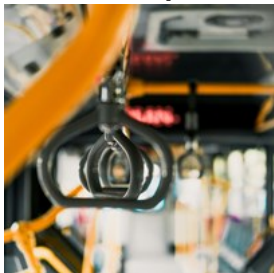
Al-Ahsa International Airport is situated approximately 20 kilometres from the city centre of Hofuf, making it a quick 20-minute drive to the heart of the city. Travellers can easily reach the city centre via taxis and ride-sharing services, which are readily available outside the airport. Some hotels offer private transfers/shuttles to and from the airport.

Photo: Philip Myrtorp/Unsplash

Address: Al-Ahsa International Airport

Internet: <https://gaca.gov.sa/web/en-gb/page/home>

## Public Transport



Hofuf boasts a network of buses that connect key areas, though services can be somewhat sporadic, making them less predictable for tourists with tight schedules. Taxis and ride-sharing apps are the most convenient option to explore the city.

Photo: Reinaldo Kevin/Unsplash

## Taxi



Taxis are readily available throughout the city, though they might not always use meters—so it's wise to agree on a fare before setting off. A more convenient option to get around Hofuf is the ride-sharing apps like Uber and Careem.

Photo: Gustavo/Unsplash

## Post



In Hofuf, post offices typically operate from around 8am to 4pm, Sunday through Thursday, with some locations open on Saturdays but closed on Fridays, in line with local customs. Services at these post offices include mailing and parcel services, domestic and international shipping, and basic financial services such as bill payments and money transfers.

Photo: Ali Bakhtiari/Unsplash

Address: Central Saudi Post Office - Prince Saud Bin Jalawi Street Hofuf

Opening hours: Sun-Thu 8am-8:45pm, Fri closed, Sat

8am-12:30pm

## Pharmacy



Two of the most prominent pharmacy chains in Hofuf are Al-Dawaa and United Pharmacy. These pharmacies are well-distributed across the city, making it easy to find one close to your location for any health-related needs.

Photo: Diana Polekhina/Unsplash

Address: Al-Dawaa - King Abdulaziz Road, Historicalcenter Hafuf, Al Hofuf

Opening hours: Sun-Thu 9am-2am, Fri & Sat 4pm-12:30am

Phone: +966 800 244 4444

## Telephone



Country code: +966 Area code: 13

Photo: Miryam León/Unsplash

## Electricity



In Saudi Arabia, the plug type used is type G, featuring three rectangular pins in a triangular arrangement. The country operates on a 230V supply voltage and a frequency of 60Hz.

Photo: Hamish Kale/Unsplash

## Population

Metro area: 885,000 (2024)

## Currency

Saudi Riyal (SAR)

### Opening hours

The working week is generally from Sunday to Thursday with some businesses open Saturday mornings. Government Offices: 7:30am–2:30pm. Banks: 9:30am–4:30pm.

### Newspapers

Saudi Gazette: [www.saudigazette.com.sa](http://www.saudigazette.com.sa)

Al Jazeera: [www.aljazeera.com](http://www.aljazeera.com)

### Emergency numbers

Police: 999

Ambulance: 997

Fire Department: 998

General Emergency: 911

Information is subject to change. Please contact your Lifestyle Consultant for the most up-to-date recommendations.