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marviikad/Flickr

Rose fragrance fills the air in Ta'if, a scenic Saudi town whose fertile lands are dotted with abundant rose and fruit orchards. Nestled amidst the Shafa Mountain range not far from Mecca, Ta'if historically used to be a major commercial hub for countries of the Arabian Peninsula, but has now transformed into a popular summer holiday destination with well-developed infrastructure, magnificent natural beauty and a mild climate, in pleasant contrast to much of the country.

NOTE: This Guide has been limited to 20 points of interest per section. For the full guide, please visit ArrivalGuides.com



Joe El Naggar/Shutterstock.com



Peter Dowley/Flickr

QUIZ

*What Type of Traveller
Are You Based on
Your Travel IQ?*

TAKE THE QUIZ

Top 5



Shafa Mountains & Cable Car

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Souk Okaz

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Rose Farms and Factories

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Shubra Palace

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King Fahad Garden

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THE CITY



KELANTAN JOTTINGS/Flickr (image cropped)

The Saudi summertime favorite of Ta'if is located at a distance from the beaches and humid waterside areas of the country up in the mountains, at an elevation of 1700 meters above sea level (some areas reach up to 5000m).

During the summer months, the town's population doubles and the king himself, along with the Saudi government, relocate here for this hottest time of the year.

Ta'if is a city of historic significance which attracts visitors with its archaeological sites as much as its natural beauty. The city is known for its numerous rose fields and rose processing factories - the tradition of rose water and oils production started over a century back and is still going strong. The town is not only known for its roses - grapes, figs, pears, peaches, watermelons (and more) are all grown here organically and are available for purchase in the local souks and markets.

Ta'if is home to the Al-Massara International Equestrian Center (one of the most renowned in the country) where horse races and "pageants" are held frequently, drawing visitors from all over the nearby areas.

DO & SEE



Peter Dowley/Flickr (image cropped)

Ta'if's number one attraction is, perhaps, its natural beauty. No visit to the area is complete without exploring the Shafa Mountains and taking a ride on the cable car - one of the most ambitious projects of the kind on the entire peninsula. Some of the most scenic areas full of parks, gardens and fruit farms include Al-Hada and Al-Shifa, conveniently connected to each other via a two-way road.

The town of Ta'if holds a few interesting locations, such as the famous Shubra Palace, historic Turkish Fort, informative National Museum and cultural Souk Okaz.

Shafa Mountains & Cable Car



An overwhelming number of travelers come to Ta'if for the beautiful vistas and attractions in the mountainous areas surrounding the city.

Al-Hada and Al-Shifa are two locations with public parks, gardens and agricultural zones not to be missed. A cable car journey up to the Al-Hada Mountain starts down in Al-Kurr Village and takes visitors all the way up to the mountaintop, where an upscale restaurant and hotel are located.

Photo: drpyan/Shutterstock.com

Address: Shafa Road, Taif

Souk Okaz



Souk Okaz is a historic marketplace dating back to the pre-Islamic era, when Arabian intellectuals gathered here to share ideas and discuss various issues. The Souk today (in addition to being a market) hosts a number of events, including seminars and lectures, that ring back to its glorious past.

Photo: Philip Lange/Shutterstock.com

Address: Soq Okadh, Taif

Phone: +966 2 725 3100

Internet: www.sooqokaz.com

Rose Farms and Factories



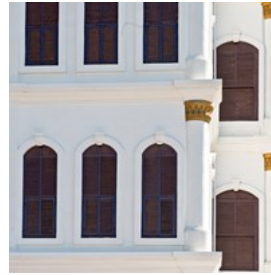
Ta'if is known as the "City of Roses" - roses have been farmed here for hundreds of years, and visitors to the area today have the unique opportunity of visiting one of the factories where the delicate flowers are processed and turned into perfumes, aromatic rose water and other products. One of the factories open to visitors is Al Gadhi Rose Factory:

Photo: Heather (image cropped)

Address: As Salamah Street, Ta'if

Phone: +966 2 2 733 4133

Shubra Palace



The Palace is an attraction inside and out - the building itself is a fine example of old Ta'if architecture; it also contains the the Ta'if Regional Museum. The museum's exhibits provide a brief excursus into Saudi royal history (King Abdul-Aziz and, later, King Faisal both resided here).

Photo: Gimas/Shutterstock.com

Address: Shubra Street, Ta'if

Phone: +966 2 2 732 1033

King Fahad Garden



King Fahad Garden is a popular recreation spot in the city that boasts a well-developed infrastructure - the garden contains large green spaces, a lagoon with an artificial waterfall, a number of cafés and restaurants as well as a few souvenir shops.

Photo: roroto12p/Shutterstock.com

Address: Alhada Road, Ta'if

DINING



Momen Khaiti/Shutterstock.com

Ta'if is not particularly known for its restaurant scene, but there are quite a few local eateries scattered throughout town. Grains such as wheat or rice and meats such as chicken or lamb constitute the bulk of Saudi cuisine (pork is normally not served in the country, as its consumption is forbidden by Islam). Yogurt is often used in local cooking, and dates constitute a dessert staple. The signature dish to try when in Ta'if is a local variety of rice and milk pudding called "seleeg".

Mirage Indian Restaurant

Located on the 30th floor of Awaliv Hotel, this eatery is one that, perhaps, tops the list of Indian restaurants in Ta'if. The menu offers an assortment of Indian dishes. Bear in mind that on the weekends, the restaurant caters to families only, so individual diners are advised to visit on working days only.

Address: As Sadad, Ta'if
Phone: +966 2 748 4444

Albaik

The Albaik fast-food restaurant holds somewhat of a legendary status in Ta'if (and Saudi Arabia in general). Immensely beloved by locals, this restaurant is frequently busy with visitors and serves a variety of chicken- and sea food-based dishes that are consistently finger-licking good.

Address: Abu Bakr As Siddiq, Ta'if
Phone: +966 50 707 8308

Kabayan Restaurant

Kabayan Restaurant serves Philippino cuisine, and boasts a quite extensive list of menu items ranging from starters to desserts. Kabayan is the only establishment in Ta'if serving Philippino food. The quality of food is impeccable, and friendly, attentive service guaranteed.

Address: Al Aziziyah, Ta'if
Phone: +966 509289682

Uno Chicago Grill

When visiting the scenic mountainous area of Al Hada, travelers can choose to dine at the Ramada Hotel, whose adjacent restaurant serves succulent steaks and fish, as well as a variety of appetizers and other Western-style foods such as pizza. The restaurant offers direct view of the Shafa Mountains cable car.

Address: Telefrique Station Ring Road, Ta'if
Internet: www.facebook.com/pages/Uno-Chicago-Grill-Ramada-Hotel/166422863553095
More Info: At Ramada Hotel

Ahlan Wa Sahlan

The restaurant offer a wide selection of high-quality meat, sea food and vegetarian dishes. Expect friendly service and Turkish flavors.

Address: Shubra Street, Ta'if
Phone: +966 2 732 7324

CAFÉS



Sophie James/Shutterstock.com

There are a few cafés throughout the city, with Western-style cafés and coffee house gaining increasing popularity. Ta'if boasts a number of local and international chains, as well as individual establishments.

Vitamin Palace

Vitamin Palace attracts visitors with its enticing display of fresh fruit, and offers a large variety of fresh fruit juices and smoothies. The café offers a few meal options, too - traditional Arabic shawarma, sandwiches and other dishes are available to order.

Address: Abu Baker Siddeeq Road, Ta'if
Phone: +966 7323073
Internet: www.vitaminpalacegcc.com

Barn Café

Barn Café is a Saudi-wide chain with a couple of locales in the city of Ta'if. Meals are not served here, as the establishment specializes rather on hot and cold beverages (coffee in particular), but a selection of baked goods are available for purchase.

Address: Shihar, Ta'if
Phone: +966 12 669 6201
Internet: www.barncafe.com.sa
More Info: Another location at Abu Bakr As Siddiq, Shubra

Starbucks

This Ta'if installment of the worldwide chain of coffee houses serves drip brew, specialty iced and hot coffee and espresso drinks, teas and bakery items. The café is popular with locals and visitors alike. You can purchase a bag of coffee to take home with you.

Address: Shehar, Taif
Phone: +966 56 888 8363

Etoile café

The Etoile café is a local establishment that specializes on hot drinks such as coffee (multiple varieties available) and sweet accompaniments to them such as cakes and pies. The interior is understated and the service attentive.

Phone: +966 56 888 8146

BARS & NIGHTLIFE



stockcreations/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 strong Arabic coffee.

SHOPPING



Ilona Ignatova/Shutterstock.com

While Souk Okaz is more of a cultural experience, most great bargains are to be had at Souk Al-Balad, where everything from handicrafts to spices to silver and gold items are on sale. Ta'if offers shopping opportunities to fit any taste, including modern shopping malls, individual boutiques and busy markets. Do not miss Shahr Street - the local shopping street lined with fixed-price stores.

Souk Okaz



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Photo: Philip Lange/Shutterstock.com

Address: Soq Okadh, Taif

Phone: +966 2 725 3100

Internet: www.sooqokaz.com

Joury Mall



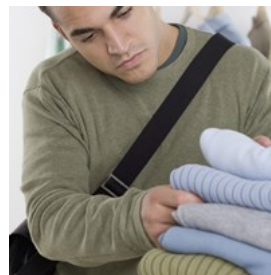
Joury Mall is the newest and, arguably, finest mall in the city of Ta'if. A number of local and international brands are represented at its many stores, and visitors are welcome to explore the family entertainment areas (Billy Bees and Sparky's) as well as the food court with a variety of eateries.

Photo: Naufal MQ/Shutterstock.com

Address: King Khalid Street, Ta'if

Internet: www.jourymall.com

Heart Mall



Ta'if's Heart Mall was, for the longest time, the city's only shopping center of the kind. Now that the Joury Mall is a fair competitor, the Heart Mall has experienced a decline in visitors. It does have its advantages, however - the selection of stores here is decent and the location right next to Shubra Palace in the city center is unbeatable.

Photo: Blend Images/Shutterstock.com

Address: Abu Bakr As Siddiq, Ta'if

Phone: +966 127344445

Internet: www.taifsheart.com

Queen's Taste



Queen's Taste Sweets is an unmissable shopping spot in Ta'if - the establishment sells an immense variety of sweets, chocolates, baked goods and cakes. Many of the items truly are pieces of art, and work well as a special treat or even as gifts for loved ones.

Photo: HLPhoto/Shutterstock.com

Address: Bldg 6647, Unit 1, Shehar-Shihar Street, Ta'if

Phone: +966 532 918 494

Internet: www.queenstaste.com

TOURIST INFORMATION



Basheer Olakara/Flickr (image cropped)

Ta'if Regional Airport



The Ta'if Regional Airport is a compact air hub located about 15km away from the town. Despite it being a "regional" airport it serves a number of

international destinations (most located on the Arabian Peninsula). There is a local bus service to the city (run by the Saudi Public Transport Company).

Photo: Juan Garces

Address: Ta'if Regional Airport

Phone: +966 12 726 0012

Internet: www.gaca.gov.sa

Public Transport



Buses operated by the SAPTCO (Saudi Arabian Public Transport Company) as well as private minibuses circulate around the city.

Destinations are displayed in the front window (in Arabic), so yell out your desired destination to passing buses to find the right one. The main station in Ta'if is located on Airport Road, next to the Centerpoint Mall.

Photo: Pierre-Luc Auclair

Address: Al Faisaliah - Airport Road, Ta'if

Phone: +966 53 515 7318

Internet: www.saptco.com.sa

More Info: Opposite the Civil Status

Taxi



To call a cab, ask the hotel staff for assistance. Otherwise, white taxis are widely available and can be flagged down throughout the city.

Drivers will most often readily use meters.

Photo: ArrivalGuides

Pharmacy



Ghaya Pharmacy Shehar, Hawaya, Ta'if +966 12 745 0209 Alnahdi Pharmacy 267, Shihar, Ta'if +966 12 748 6469

Photo: Gemma Garner

Post



Saudi Post

Photo: Andy Fuchs

Address: Jubrah, Taif

Opening hours: 7.30am-9pm
Phone: +966 0127381200
Internet: www.sp.com.sa

Tourism Call Center
19988

Telephone



Saudi Arabia +966 Ta'if
city code 2

Photo: Jardson Almeida

Electricity



127/220 V, 60 Hz

Photo: Stirling Tschan

Population

521.273 (2004)

Currency

Saudi Riyal

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 4pm-8pm. Some shops close 4 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
Traffic Accidents 993
Ambulance 997

Tourist information

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