

INTERNATIONAL OPERATIONS GROUP

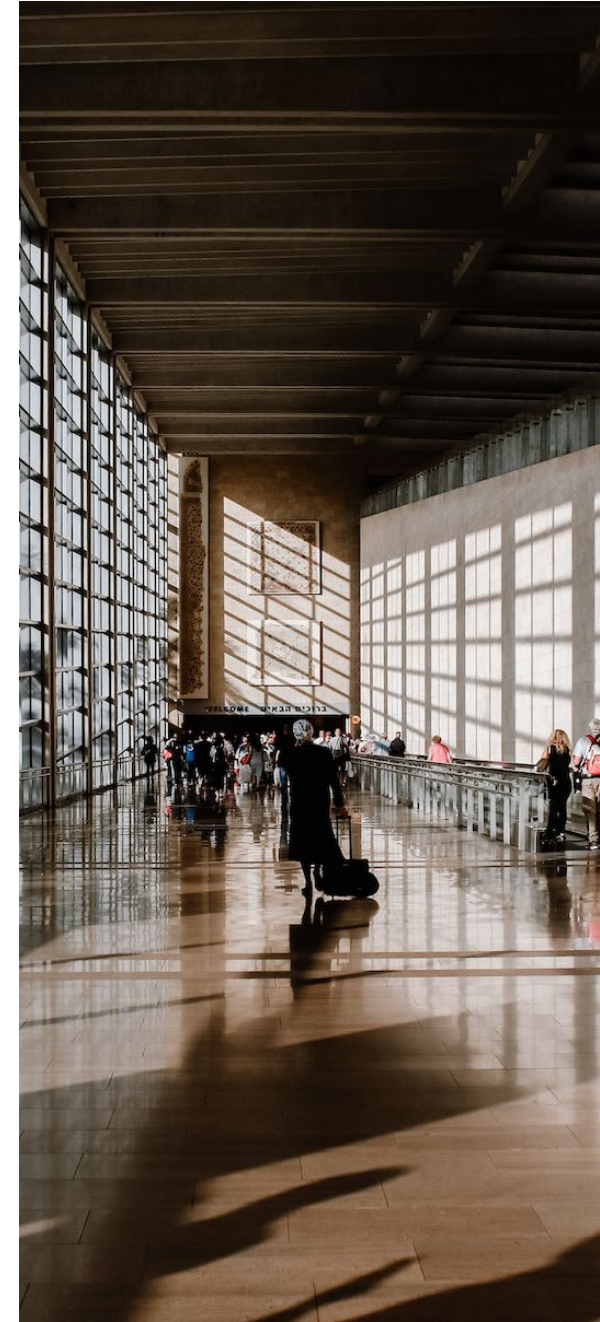


Spotlight on Saudi Arabia

What were the biggest challenges you found at this location?

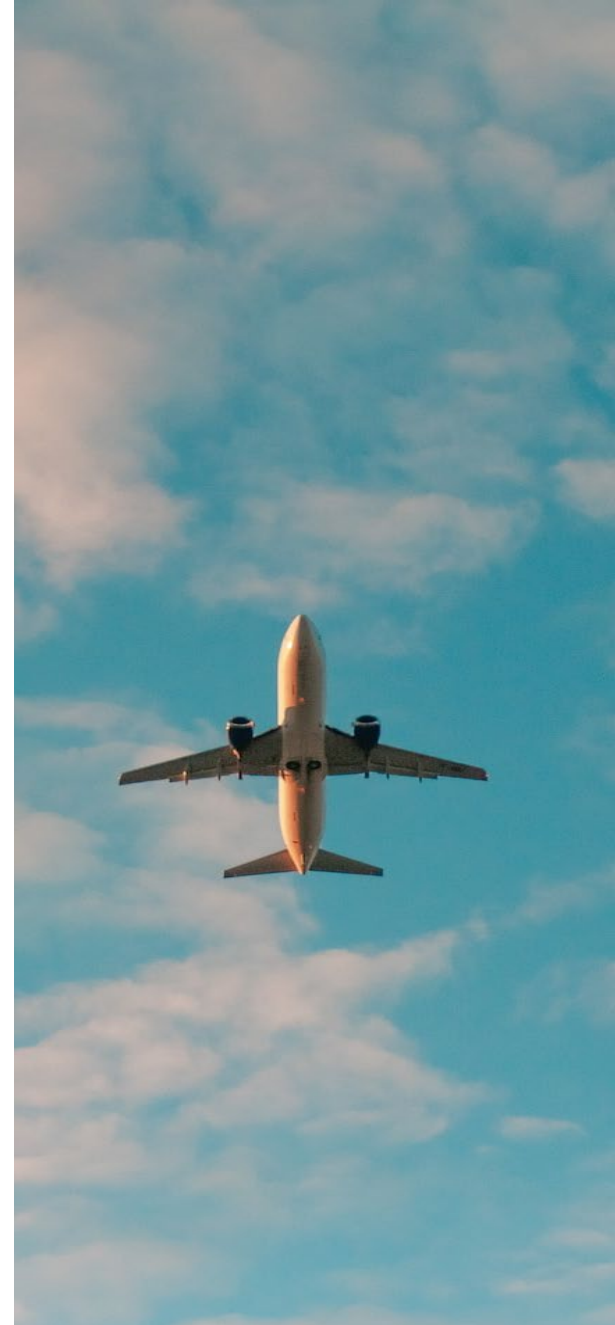
Saudi Arabia is rapidly emerging as a sought-after destination for events, fuelled by the ambitious Vision 2030 & the recent success in securing Expo 2030. As an emerging industry there are some challenges to consider when organising events.

- There is continuous investment into the events industry to develop world class venues, however currently there are limited venues available that can cater for large scale events. Infrastructure in some venues needs to be upgraded.
- Venue & service costs may be higher than what Organisers are used to.
- Additional tent structures are required for large scale events which can be problematic.
- Climate, weather conditions can be extreme ranging from heat, wind, sandstorms, rain which can cause issues at events.
- Saudi Arabia is prioritising the development of a skilled labour & workforce to cater for the demands of the events industry.
- Visa / Travel restrictions for certain countries (Business visas are mandatory for exhibitors, check with your local KSA consulate on visa regulations).
- You have to allow time to work on appointing suitable stand contractors & services providers.
- Do your research on public transportation, traffic congestion & parking congestion, like all emerging cities there can be issues..
- Freight costs can be high & organisers & their appointed freight contractors should research customs clearance regulations.
- Organisers should be mindful of cultural sensitivities between international standards & local standards when organising events.



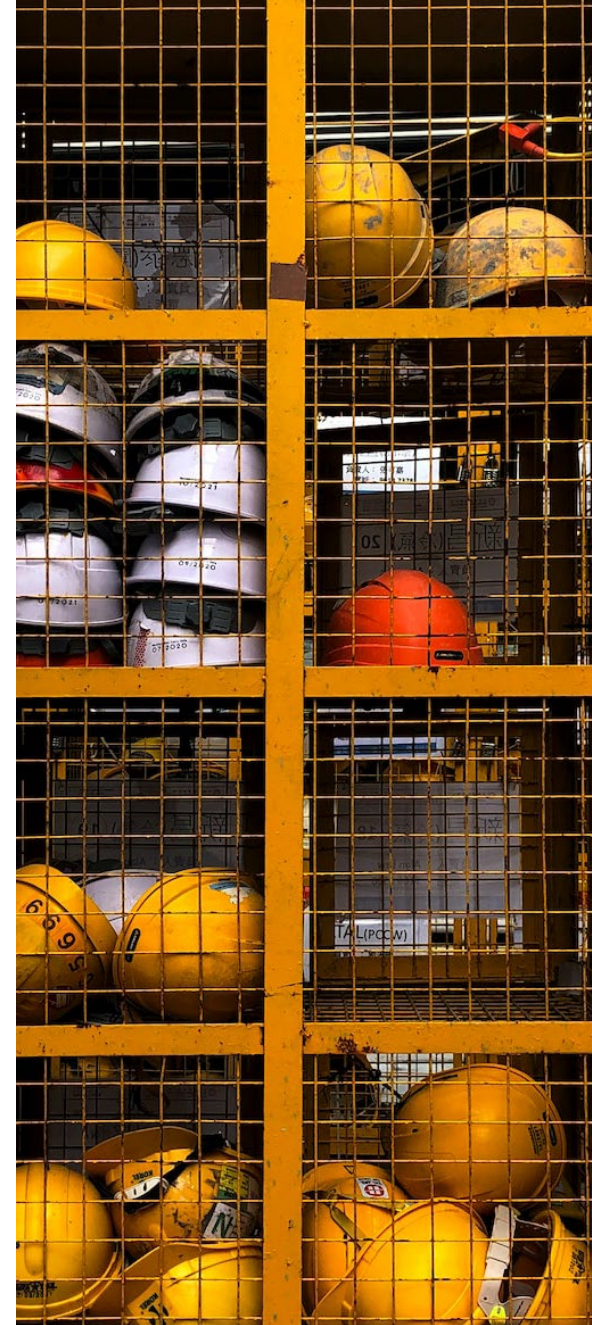
What local cultural aspects would be useful for someone coming from abroad to be aware of?

- Remember that KSA has only started to relax it's rules in recent years and while they are steadily adapting to western culture, the local culture, traditions and heritage should be respected.
- People travelling to KSA should do their own research through their local KSA consulate or Embassy or Visit Saudi website on <https://www.visitsaudi.com>
- Religion plays a vital role in KSA, with Islam being the main religion. Sharia law serves as the basis for all laws in the country and includes prohibitions on alcohol, gambling and public worship of religions other than Islam.
- Dress code has been eased for ladies however they should dress modestly.
- Most of the younger educated population of KSA speak English however people should be aware that not everyone speaks English so they should make some effort to have a translator or local representative with them while they are in KSA.
- Saudi Arabia is steeped in history, culture, religion and tradition and has many beautiful tourist attractions.



Which key health and safety regulations should an organiser be aware of? This includes documents, licences, permits, stand regulations, etc.

- The venues that we work at have not been stringent on health and safety policies but this is shifting now with the high number of events taking place and their drive towards Vision 2030.
- We provide our own Risk Assessment to the venues and we carry out a thorough check of the venue during site visits.
- We appoint Floor Managers to manage all stages of the event from build up, show days to break down.
- Some of the venues make it mandatory for us to appoint a Health & Safety Officer through them however we also provide our own H&S officer(s).
- PPE is mandatory at all of our events globally including KSA & we have educated all contractors & exhibitors or anyone entering the venue exhibition area that they must wear PPE during build up & break down.
- Safety and / or Civil Defence Reports are mandatory for some venues such as Riyadh Front, Super Dome Jeddah, Jeddah Exhibition & Convention Centre.
- Fire Safety Reports are usually mandatory for all tent structures depending on the venue. Fire extinguishers are required for all events & not always supplied by the venue.



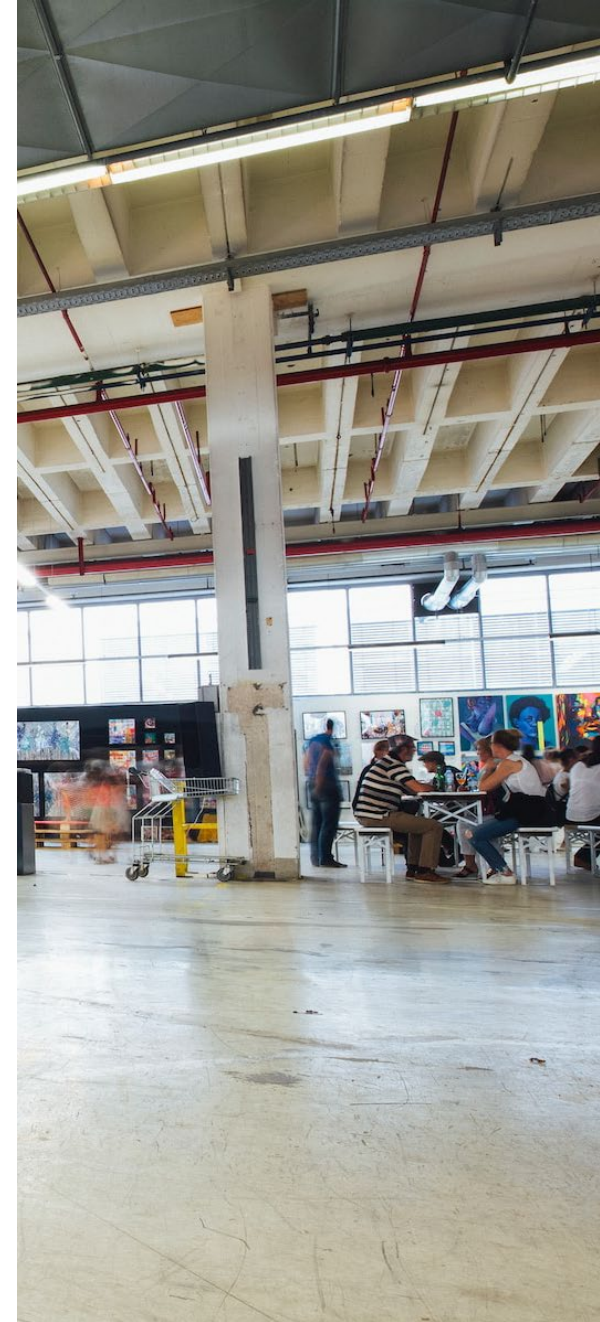
What sustainability measures and initiatives have you witnessed in this location?

- Some of the venues we work in make it mandatory for us to hire their skips and their cleaning team and from what I know there is no sustainability measures put in place by the venue through this process.
- Sustainability is something that venues are adapting to & we are actively working with them to find companies that will manage waste in a better manner, like charity banks, recycling.
- We are actively educating contractors, exhibitors, venues to improve their sustainability standards by asking contractors to use pre-fabricated material for their stand construction that can be easily assembled & recycled.
- We are asking venues to invest in compressors for waste skips to cut down on the number of skips required.
- We are also actively seeking companies that can come onsite to flat pack packaging material, wood, stone & recycle it.



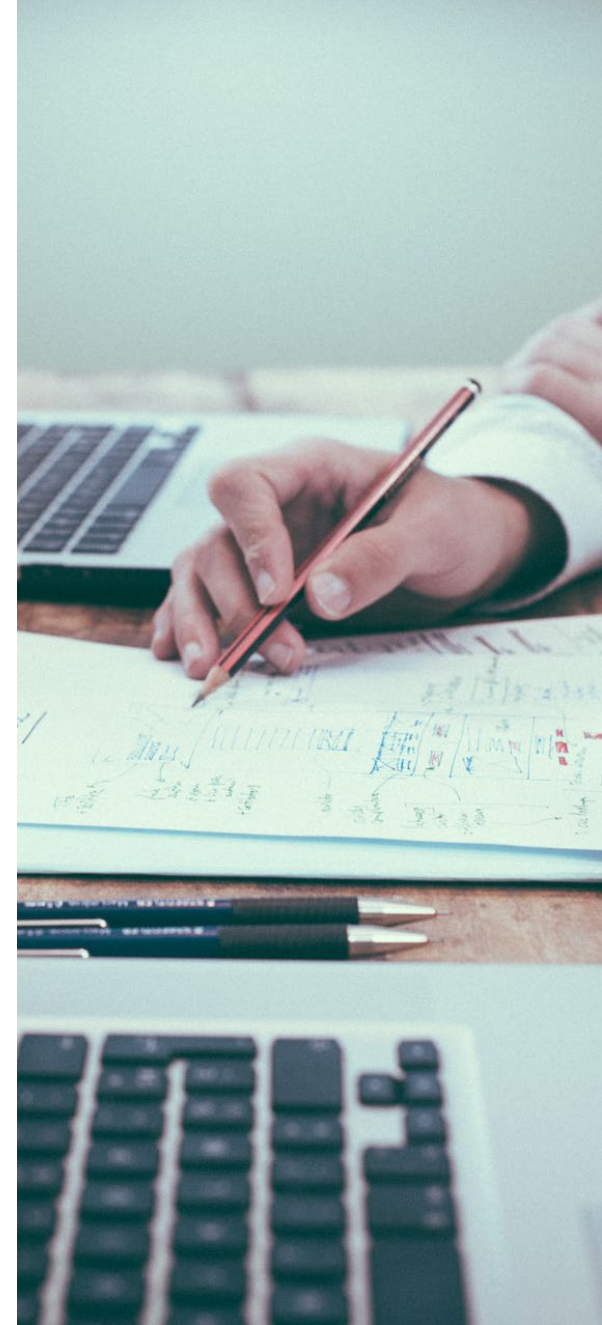
Supplier relationships – do you have any advice to ease the relationship with suppliers?

- We have appointed our long-term reliable official show and freight contractors to work on the shows in KSA, they have to have their own company entity set up in KSA to be able to operate in KSA and they have their own production units and warehouses there.
- Educating all contractors on our expectations and how we work is very important, therefore we have regular webinars with them, they receive constant reminders from our stand services team and prior to each event we run a contractor day in a hotel close to the venue to repeat our requirements.
- It takes time to assess local contractors & identify the ones that are professional & able to deliver a good services.
- Communication with contractors must be in English & Arabic, therefore our online exhibitors manual, contractors hub & all other communications will be in both languages.
- Build good relationships with suppliers & venues.
- It is important to have someone from your company who has strong relationships with local authorities / Government bodies.



Budgeting: Identify venue specific areas with higher costs to allocate more funds, such as featured areas or catering.

- Demand exceeds supply, therefore the cost of everything associated with running events in KSA can be expensive.
- Services that can be high in cost include cleaning, security, traffic marshalls, electrical mains, rigging, carpet, signage.
- Venue costs may be high.
- Catering is not generally expensive, in some venues catering has to be sourced by the organisers in the form of pop-up cafes, food trucks etc.
- Accommodation demand exceeds supply, therefore this cost can be high depending on high / low season.
- Flights are expensive because of demand.



What suggestions would you provide to anyone working in this location for the first time?

- Take time to do a site visit at least once before your event.
- Arrange to meet with venue team, suppliers, contractors.
- Have realistic expectations bearing in mind that KSA is a developing Middle East nation that has only recently opened its borders to the wider world.
- Look for local partners that have knowledge of the industry.
- Respect local people, traditions, culture.
- Check out visa regulations.



Any other useful information to be considered?

- KSA is vast in size with a relatively small population. The population of KSA is approximately 37,500,000
- It is 2.15 million km² in size, the largest country in the Middle East and the 13th largest country in the world. The distances between major cities like Riyadh, Jeddah, Dammam is long.
- Take time to build strong relationships & trust with venues & suppliers.
- Understand that services may not be at the same level that you are used to in other countries but they are constantly aiming to improve on their services.
- Adapt a humble & respectful approach when you meet & speak with people in KSA including venue teams, suppliers, contractors.

