

Jan - Mar 2015

Red Seas, White Sands, Blue Skies: An American Citizens Services Newsletter

Can you believe it is already 2015? According to some movies from the last century we are supposed to be riding around in flying cars, enjoying the services of our personal robots, and cruising the streets on our hoverboards by now.

While the Embassy can't offer hoverboard rides, we can offer a wide range of other services, and we look forward to providing those for you this year. We offer appointments between 1:00pm and 3:30pm on most business days to help you with first time passports, passport renewals, additional pages for existing passports, notary services, and Consular Reports of Birth Abroad. Appointments can be made online by following this link: <https://evisaforms.state.gov/acs/default.asp?postcode=RID&appcode=1>.

As January is a month when you start to make your travel plans for the year, please take the time this month to check the expiration date of your U.S. passports and Saudi visas. The Saudi government often issues a shorter visa validity if your U.S. passport expiration date is approaching, so be sure to renew your passport early.

January is also the beginning of tax season. Click here <http://www.irs.gov/Filing> to find answers to all of your questions regarding filing for 2014.

We continuously strive to communicate with as many Americans in our region as possible, so please share this with other Americans in your circle of influence. The best way to receive our messages is to register your email address at <https://step.state.gov/step/>. Additionally, our website, <http://riyadh.usembassy.gov/> offers a great deal of information about issues and concerns in this region. We will also hold another town hall meeting this year to communicate with you face to face. As always, we encourage you to reach out to us with any questions or concerns you may have and we look forward to staying in touch with you this year.

Best wishes to you and your families for a healthy and prosperous 2015!

Jeff Austin
American Citizen Services
Embassy of the United States of America
Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

"Get in STEP" to receive the ACS Newsletter - Spread the Word!

Please remind your American friends to enroll in the U.S. State Department's free Smart Traveler Enrollment Program <https://step.state.gov/step/> in order for them to be included on the ACS Newsletter mailing list. It is a great way to keep abreast of any public announcements on safety and security issues in Saudi Arabia and elsewhere.

In addition, the Newsletter is a helpful resource for the latest voting news, IRS changes, and other activities concerning Americans living in Saudi Arabia. Another benefit is that if you move to another country, updating your enrollment in STEP ensures you continue to get timely information for your new country of residence!



STEP is also an important tool that consular officers around the world use during crises to distribute up to date information on emergency situations so that travelers like you can make informed decisions regarding their safety.



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Upcoming Holiday Closures

Feb 15, 2015 - Washington's Birthday

A complete list of all of our holiday closings for 2015 is available on-line at:

<http://riyadh.usembassy.gov/holidays.html>

How to Reach Us

The US Embassy is located in the Diplomatic Quarter, in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

Public hours: Sunday through Thursday, 1:00pm-3:00pm

Schedule an Appointment:
<https://evisaforms.state.gov/acs/default.asp?postcode=RID&appcode=1>

Phone: (966)(11)488-3800

US Consulate Jeddah
Public hours: Sunday through Thursday, 1:00-3:00pm

Schedule an Appointment:
<https://evisaforms.state.gov/acs/default.asp?postcode=JDD&appcode=1>

Phone: (966)(12)667-0080

US Consulate Dhahran
Public hours: Sunday through Thursday, 1:00-3:30 pm

Schedule an Appointment: <https://evisaforms.state.gov/acs/default.asp?postcode=dhr&appcode=1>

Phone: (966)(13) 330-3200

Interest Rates Remain the Same for the First Quarter of 2015

WASHINGTON – The Internal Revenue Service today announced that IRS interest rates will remain the same for the calendar quarter beginning Jan. 1, 2015. The rates will be:

- three (3) percent for overpayments (two (2) percent in the case of a corporation);
- three (3) percent for underpayments;
- five (5) percent for large corporate underpayments; and
- one-half (0.5) percent for the portion of a corporate overpayment exceeding \$10,000.

Under the Internal Revenue Code, the rate of interest is determined on a quarterly basis. For taxpayers other than corporations, the overpayment and underpayment rate is the federal short-term rate plus 3 percentage points.

Generally, in the case of a corporation, the underpayment rate is the federal short-term rate plus 3 percentage points and the overpayment rate is the federal short-term rate plus 2 percentage points. The rate for large corporate underpayments is the federal short-term rate plus 5 percentage points. The rate on the portion of a corporate overpayment of tax exceeding \$10,000 for a taxable period is the federal short-term rate plus one-half (0.5) of a percentage point. The interest rates announced today are computed from the federal short-term rate determined during October 2014 to take effect Nov. 1, 2014, based on daily compounding.

Social Security Announces 1.7 Percent Benefit Increase for 2015

Monthly Social Security and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits for nearly 64 million Americans will increase 1.7 percent in 2015, the Social Security Administration announced today.

The 1.7 percent cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) will begin with benefits that more than 58 million Social Security beneficiaries receive in January 2015. Increased payments to more than 8 million SSI beneficiaries began on December 31, 2014. The Social Security Act ties the annual COLA to the increase in the Consumer Price Index as determined by the Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Some other changes that take effect in January of each year are based on the increase in average wages. Based on that increase, the maximum amount of earnings subject to the Social Security tax (taxable maximum) will increase to \$118,500 from \$117,000. Of the estimated 168 million workers who will pay Social Security taxes in 2015, about 10 million will pay higher taxes because of the increase in the taxable maximum.

Information about Medicare changes for 2015 is available at www.Medicare.gov



The Social Security Act provides for how the COLA is calculated. To read more, please visit www.socialsecurity.gov/cola

Tax Season Opens As Planned Following Extenders Legislation

IR-2014-119, Dec. 29, 2014: WASHINGTON -- Following the passage of the extenders legislation, the Internal Revenue Service announced today it anticipates opening the 2015 filing season as scheduled in January. The IRS will begin accepting tax returns electronically on Jan. 20. Paper tax returns will begin processing at the same time. The decision follows Congress renewing a number of "extender" provisions of the tax law that expired at the end of 2013. These provisions were renewed by Congress through the end of 2014. The final legislation was signed into law Dec 19, 2014.

"We have reviewed the late tax law changes and determined there was nothing preventing us from continuing our updating and testing of our systems," said IRS Commissioner John Koskinen. "Our employees will continue an aggressive schedule of testing and preparation of our systems during the next month to complete the final stages needed for the 2015 tax season."

The IRS reminds taxpayers that filing electronically is the most accurate way to file a tax return and the fastest way to get a refund. There is no advantage to people filing tax returns on paper in early January instead of waiting for e-file to begin.

More information about IRS Free File and other information about the 2015 filing season will be available in January.

Post-Election Active Duty Military Survey

A special message for Active Duty Service Members: FVAP is administering the "2014 Post-Election Voting Survey of the Active Duty Military" and we need your help! We conduct this survey after every Federal election and it is our primary source of information about the experiences of military members during each election. If invited to participate in this important effort please take the time to complete the survey!

How do you know if you were invited? You should have received an email or letter from us with a link to the survey and your unique Ticket Number. To locate this information, please search your email inbox for emails from this address: ADMSurvey@dmdc.osd.mil, containing the subject line "2014 Post-Election Voting Survey of the Active Duty Military." Or you can contact the Survey Processing Center directly at 1-800-881-5307 or ADM-Survey@mail.mil. Reminders will be sent out later this week.

Whether you voted or not in the 2014 election, we are hoping to hear from you! We don't ask any questions about your political party affiliation or other personal, political choices. We also know you're very busy and your time with your friends and family is important, so these surveys are "Official Business" and can be completed during your normal, working hours.

The survey is voluntary, but your input could directly impact our Agency's effort in the coming years. Thank you so much for your participation!



How do I replace or amend a Consular Report of Birth Abroad (CRBA)

The Consular Report of Birth Abroad (FS-240) for your child is a basic citizenship document. The Embassy cannot provide replacement or extra copies of the Consular Report of Birth Abroad.

If you wish to replace, amend or request multiple copies of a Consular Report of Birth, please refer to the [Department of State website](#).

Reminder – Appointment Required for All ACS Services

In order to reduce your wait time and serve you more efficiently, the American Citizen Services Unit uses an online appointment system for all routine services.

This includes passport renewals for adults and minors, reports of birth abroad, adding visa pages, and notarials. If you have an urgent, unforeseen need to travel, such as a death or illness, please contact us at RiyadhACS@state.gov



Friendly Reminder: Every day we have a number of no-shows for routine services. If you make an appointment and find you cannot keep it, please log back into the appointment system and cancel the appointment so that the appointment slot will be available to another client.

Please note that we cannot book appointments over the phone. To make or cancel an appointment, please visit the U.S Citizen Services Appointment System: <https://evisaforms.state.gov/acs/default.asp?postcode=RID&appcode=1>

Please see Saudi Arabia's updated Country Specific Information

Nov 2014 : <http://www.travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/country/saudi-arabia.html>

How to obtain a U.S birth certificate

To obtain vital records in the United States, such as birth certificates, please check the following website for more information: <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/w2w.htm>

If you do not have your original birth certificate, click [here](#) for guidance on how to obtain a replacement .

Where to write for vital records [PDF Version](#)  (591 KB)

Travel Alerts and Warnings

The U.S. Department of State regularly issues travel alerts or travel warnings for various countries and regions. Please go to: <http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/alertswarnings.html> to view the messages.

On January 9, 2015, the Department of State issued a Worldwide Caution on the continuing threat of terrorist actions and violence against U.S. citizens and interests throughout the world. U.S. citizens are reminded to maintain a high level of vigilance and to take appropriate steps to increase their security awareness.

For the current advisory please visit:

<http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/alertswarnings/worldwide-caution.html>

Leaving Saudi Arabia?

If you no longer live in or travel to Saudi Arabia, or you need to update your registration status so that you no longer receive travel updates and our ACS Newsletter, please go to the [Smart Traveler Enrollment Program \(STEP\)](#).

Updating your status in [STEP](#) will remove you from the mailing list for this newsletter and other Embassy Messages for U.S. citizens traveling to or living in Saudi Arabia .

If you encounter any difficulties or have any questions about our travel registration website, please send an e-mail to CASTEP@state.gov.

Gulf Region Travel Information for U.S Citizens

Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen are all exciting countries with many interesting adventures to experience. We hope that by following the tips in this guide, your trip will also be a safe one.

Please copy and paste the address in your Internet browser to view the brochure: [http://travel.state.gov/content/dam/passports/Arabian%20Gulf%20ACS%20Brochure%20\(2\).pdf#](http://travel.state.gov/content/dam/passports/Arabian%20Gulf%20ACS%20Brochure%20(2).pdf#)



Please see the updated Travel Warning for Saudi Arabia dated Aug 2014 :

<http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/alertswarnings/saudi-arabia-travel-warning.html>

Washington Monument Activity

Located in Washington, D.C., at the western end of the National Mall, this four-sided stone structure (modeled after a classic Egyptian obelisk) honors the "Father of our Country," General, Founding Father, and the first President of the United States (1789-1797), George Washington.



At just over 555 feet tall, the Washington Monument towers over everything in Washington, D.C. and is one of the tallest masonry structures in the world.

Memorial stones from the 50 states, foreign countries, and organizations line the inside walls. Fifty flags surround the base of the Washington Monument and symbolize the 50 states of the Union. If you take the elevator to the pyramid top, windows in the observation room offer views of the Lincoln Memorial, the White House, the Jefferson Memorial, and the U.S. Capitol.

Located between the Washington Monument and the Lincoln Memorial lies the Reflecting Pool. This 2000 x 160 foot pool contains 7 million gallons of water. It was modeled after similar pools at Versailles and the Taj Mahal. The design of the pool minimizes wind ripples and sharpens the watery image of the Washington Monument.

Directions: Based on what you learned about the Washington Monument above, complete the paragraph below.

Taj Mahal

First

White

Countries

reflecting pool

Lincoln

Jefferson

Versailles

Capitol

George Washington

Obelisk

Washington, D.C.

The Washington Monument was modeled after a classic Egyptian structure called the _____. It was built to honor the _____ president and founding father, _____. The monument consists of memorial stones that were donated by states, _____, and organizations. It is located on the National Mall in _____. The _____ contains 7 million gallons of water and was modeled after pools from _____ and the _____. From the top, you can see the _____ Memorial, _____ House, _____ Memorial, and the _____.

Constitution Crossword

ACROSS

1. Place where the original Constitution can be viewed. (16 letters)
5. First state to ratify the Constitution. (8 letters)
9. Fearing tyranny from a strong central government, some states demanded this be added to the Constitution. (12 letters)
11. He is known as the "Sage of the Constitutional Convention." (8 letters)
13. These essays were written to defend and promote the ratification of the new Constitution. (16 letters)
14. Name given to the group who did not favor ratification of the Constitution. (15 letters)
15. This amendment was repealed. (10 letters)

DOWN

1. This state's signing ratified the Constitution. (12 letters)
2. State that did not send delegates to the Constitutional Convention. (11 letters)
3. The 13th Amendment abolished . (7 letters)
4. He introduced the Bill of Rights in the House of Representatives on June 8, 1789. (7 letters).
6. The Constitutional Convention met in this city. (12 letters)
7. The part of the Constitution where you find the phrase "in order to form a more perfect union." (8 letters)
8. Number of amendments to the Constitution. (11 letters)
10. Article that establishes the Constitution as the supreme law of the country. (2 letters)
12. The Nineteenth Amendment protects the voting rights of . (5 letters)

