



Kuwait

Status: Constitutional Monarchy on Persian Gulf
Area: 6,880 sq. miles (estimate)
Population: 2,832,776 (2016 est.)
Currency: 1000 fils = 1 Dinar, 1 Dinar = U.S. \$3.27



Kuwait can trace its modern history to the early 18th century when an offshoot of the Anaiza tribe from central Arabia settled around some brackish wells near what is now Kuwait City. In its early years the settlement prospered from dhow building and pearl fishing with little European contact. When the Persians attacked Basra in 1775, the British were forced to temporarily move some of their operations to Kuwait. The first known mail from Kuwait dates from this period.



Kuwait started its own independent postal system in 1958 and issued its own stamps in 1959, Scott 140.



Two stamps from India overprinted "Kuwait" from the 1929 to 1937 era, Scott 31, 50.

Although Kuwait was nominally under Ottoman suzerainty, fighting within the royal family led the sheikh to seek British protection in 1896. The British were initially unreceptive. British policy at the time was to support the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire. But German and Russian plans to build a railroad to the Persian Gulf led to a change of heart and, in 1899, Great Britain signed a treaty with Kuwait. A subsequent agreement, in 1904, granted the British the right to establish a post office in Kuwait.

London deferred the post office for political reasons. Nevertheless, the political agency became an unofficial post office processing thousands of letters each year. Mail originating in Kuwait was cancelled across the Persian Gulf in Bushire (Iran).



Sief Palace is on a set of 1981 stamps, Scott 860.

When Turkey joined the Central Powers in World War I, the British recognized Kuwait as an independent government under its protection. The long-awaited post office opened on June 21, 1915. Overprinted Indian stamps were placed on public sale. The British military carried the mail by steamer to Basra, Iraq.

On August 1, 1921, the British transferred the postal administration to the new Kingdom of Iraq. On April 1, 1923, the first Kuwait stamps (overprints) were issued. A motorable tract to Basra opened in 1927 providing an alternative to the biweekly steamer. Iraq continued to operate the Kuwaiti post until April 1941 when a pro-Axis coup in Baghdad led the British to cancel the arrangement. In May, after two weeks with no postal service, the Indian Post took over the Kuwaiti post office.

The Indians were replaced in August 1947 by the Pakistanis, who in turn were replaced by the British General Post Office on April 1, 1948. The Kuwaitis set up their own internal mail system February 1, 1958. A year later, Kuwait assumed full responsibility for its mail service. On June 1, 1961, Kuwait became fully independent.

Iraq, claiming that Kuwait was rightfully part of its country, invaded on August 2, 1990. With the invasion came the Iraqi postal service. Iraqi stamps were used exclusively until Kuwait was liberated in April 1991. The Kuwaiti government issued two "Free Kuwait" labels in January 1991 from the government in exile in Saudi Arabia. The Kuwaiti post office resumed operations on April 27, 1991. Mail received "postage paid" handstamps until May 22, when once again Kuwaiti stamps were available.

A cover with a 1953 Kuwaiti stamp — an overprint of a Great Britain Queen Elizabeth II stamp — with a Washington, D.C. postmark and an interesting postal marking, Scott 103.



A British Royal Couple Silver Wedding Anniversary stamp of 1948 overprinted for use in Kuwait, Scott 83.



A booklet in 1998 depicted Life in Pre-Oil Kuwait, Scott 1407.

