



RIYADH

A city steeped in history

Natural, archeological and architectural wonders that came to define Riyadh and Saudi Arabia's national story, writes Jonathan Gornall



1 MASMAK FORTRESS

In 1902, Abdulaziz ibn Abdul Rahman Al-Saud, who would achieve fame as Ibn Saud, the man who would go on to found the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, led a small party of warriors west to Riyadh, attacking Masmak Fortress, driving out the rival Rashidi forces and reclaiming his family's rightful heritage. The fort remains today as a museum of Saudi history.



2 DIRIYAH

Diriyah rose to prominence in 1720, when Saud ibn Mohammed of Al-Muqrin assumed the leadership of the town, founding the House of Saud. In 2010 Al-Turaif district of Diriyah was listed as a UNESCO World Heritage site. In 2019 King Salman laid the foundation stone of the Diriyah Gate project, a 7-square-kilometer development now nearing completion as a global cultural and lifestyle destination.



3 WADI HANIFAH

In 1446 Ibn Dir, the ruler of Hajr, a town on the site of modern-day Riyadh, offered land on the fertile banks of the Wadi Hanifah to his cousin, Mana'a Al-Muraide, leader of the Marada clan of Al-Duru tribe of Bani Hanifah. Al-Muraide and his people named their new home Diriyah after their old settlement. Ever since, the wadi has flowed through the story of Saudi Arabia.



4 QASR AL-MURABBA

Following the foundation of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in 1932, the Qasr Al-Hokm was no longer large enough to serve as the seat of government, so a new, purpose-built venue was built 2 km to the north of the old city. Completed in 1938, it was the first development outside the city walls. Today Al-Murabba stands at the heart of the King Abdulaziz Historical Center.