

## Traverse through mountains, craters, fragrant gardens in Taif-City of Roses

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Dhaka: Taif, often referred to as the City of Roses, is a captivating destination in Saudi Arabia, celebrated for its picturesque mountains, fragrant rose fields, and renowned perfume factories. Known as the summer retreat of the Kingdom, Taif offers a refreshing escape from the heat, with its cool climate and stunning natural beauty.

Among its many attractions are the majestic Al Hada Mountain, famous for its scenic cable car ride, lush rose fields, and hiking trails, as well as the Al Kar Tourist Village, which features a water park and an exhilarating toboggan slide.

The city's unique charm is further reflected in its array of hotels and resorts as well as its mouthwatering culinary offerings, making it a perfect getaway for visitors.

## **Al-Shafa Mountain**

Located approximately 30 kilometers from Taif, accessible via Okba Al-Mohammadia Road that connects Taif to Makkah, Al-Shafa Mountain is a breathtaking destination.

Rising over 2,500 meters above sea level, Al-Shafa Mountain offers awe-inspiring views of the surrounding Sarawat Mountain peaks, often shrouded in white fog and surrounded by the aromatic scent of juniper trees.

The mountain is a paradise for nature lovers and photographers, especially during sunset, when the warm hues of the sun cast a golden glow over the Tohama plains, fertile valleys, and green fields of pomegranate, grape, and fig trees.

Al-Shafa Mountain is also steeped in history, with heritage villages and ancient forts showcasing traditional architectural designs. The remnants of stone doors and windows provide a glimpse into the past, allowing visitors to travel back in time and admire the craftsmanship of the region's ancestors. The mountain's slopes are adorned with rain waterfalls, creating a mesmerizing sight that is perfect for capturing memories.

For adventure enthusiasts, the winding roads of Al-Shafa Mountain offer an exhilarating driving experience. The rocky cliffs, lush valleys, and aromatic juniper trees create a sensory feast, especially when explored in a four-wheel-drive vehicle. Hiking to the mountain's highest peaks is another rewarding activity, offering panoramic views that are worth documenting.

At night, visitors can gather around a fire with friends, sipping tea, and savoring grilled corn under the moonlight. The area also features spacious outdoor seating areas where families can enjoy barbecues or order from local and international food caravans stationed nearby.

## **Al-Hada Mountain**

Al-Hada Mountain, one of Saudi Arabia's most famous peaks, is part of the Sarawat Mountain range, stretching over 87 kilometers between Taif and Makkah. The journey along Al-Hada Road is marked by a gradual drop in temperature, providing a refreshing escape from the

heat.

The road itself has a rich history, dating back over a thousand years, and was traditionally known as Darb Al-Jammalah, a route once used by camel caravans transporting goods.



**Cable car ride offering majestic views from Al-Hada Mountain**

At an elevation of 2,177 meters above sea level, Al-Hada Mountain is adorned with acacia and juniper trees, as well as various herbal plants. Along the road, visitors can find vendor booths selling natural products such as Taif rose water, fresh fruits, warm drinks, and snacks.

One of the highlights of Al-Hada Mountain is the Al-Kar Tourist Village, which offers a range of activities, including water games, car races, and a thrilling “flying carpet” ride that transports visitors between mountainsides via ropes. The village can be reached by cable car or by

land transport along Al-Hada Road.

For those looking to extend their stay, there are numerous hotels and resorts offering stunning views of the mountains, gardens, or city. Guests can also indulge in a variety of international and Middle Eastern cuisines served at these accommodations.

## **Wahba Crater**

Wahba Crater, located approximately 250 kilometers from Taif, is the largest and deepest volcanic crater in Saudi Arabia, with a diameter of 3,000 meters and a depth of 380 meters.

Surrounded by the Al Luhayan, Umm Rilan, and Zabna mountains, the crater is a natural wonder that attracts geologists and adventurers alike. Its unique rock formations and the legends surrounding its formation add to its allure.



Taif's Wahba Crater—the largest and deepest volcanic crater in Saudi Arabia

For hiking enthusiasts, reaching the bottom of Wahba Crater is a rewarding experience. The crater's floor features a gleaming salt dome that shines under the sun, with a seasonal water lake that evaporates in the summer, leaving behind a sabkha (salt flat). During the rainy season, wild plants grow along the edges, adding to the crater's natural beauty.

The site has been developed to enhance the visitor experience, with viewpoints made of black volcanic boulders, a visitor center, and a digital exhibition hall. The road to Wahba Crater is paved and easily accessible, making it convenient for all types of vehicles.

Visitors can also enjoy lounges with stunning views of the crater, ensuring a comfortable and memorable visit.

## Taif's roses, perfume factories

Taif's roses are one of its most iconic features, with their vibrant colors and enchanting fragrance filling the air during spring. The roses are cultivated in the high mountains of Al Sarawat and are a source of pride for the city.

Their scent permeates the streets and homes, and they are often used to adorn children during celebrations. The rose industry also plays a significant role in Taif's economy, with rose water and perfumes being highly sought-after products.



One of the most iconic features of Tair is its vibrant roses with enchanting fragrance

Visitors can explore local rose gardens and factories to witness the production process firsthand. One of the most famous factories is Rashid

Al Qurashei Factory, which offers a unique experience.

There, visitors can learn about the distillation process, from picking the roses to extracting the rose oil, which is used to create perfumes, soaps, and moisturizers. The factory also features a garden with apricot, berry, and pomegranate trees, providing a serene setting to enjoy a cup of coffee.

Another notable factory is Al Shiokh Factory, located on Al Kur-Al Hada Road. Visitors can observe the manufacturing process and purchase a range of rose-based products, including perfumes, soaps, and rose water. These products make for perfect souvenirs, allowing visitors to take a piece of Taif's beauty and fragrance home with them.

To conclude, Taif is a city that captivates with its natural wonders, rich history, and aromatic treasures. From the stunning peaks of Al-Shafa and Al-Hada Mountains to the awe-inspiring Wahba Crater and the fragrant rose fields, Taif offers a unique and unforgettable experience for every visitor.