**Full name:** The State of Kuwait  
**Government:** constitutional hereditary emirate  

**Location:** Middle East, bordering the Persian Gulf, between Iraq and Saudi Arabia  
**Capital:** Kuwait  
**Area:** 17,818 sq km (6,880 sq miles); slightly smaller than New Jersey  

**Climate:** dry desert; intensely hot summers; short, cool winters  
**Terrain:** flat to slightly undulating desert plain  
**Natural Hazards:** sudden cloudbursts are common from October to April and bring heavy rain, which can damage roads and houses; sandstorms and dust storms occur throughout the year, but are most common between March and August  

**Population:** 2.7 million (UN, 2005)  
**Ethnicity:** Kuwaiti 45%, other Arab 35%, South Asian 9%, Iranian 4%, other 7%  
**Major Language:** Arabic  
**Religion:** Muslim 85% (Sunni 70%, Shi'a 30%), other (includes Christian, Hindu, Parsi) 15%  
**Life expectancy:** 75 years (men), 79 years (women) (UN)  

**Currency:** 1 Dinar = 1000 fils