

# TRIPPING TO AL-SALMI DESERT TO STARGAZE

A GUIDE ON HOW TO PREPARE FOR SUCH A TRIP

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# When to go? How can I tell what could happen?

If you want to have an escape from the city noise and go somewhere quiet, there's no stopping you. If you're looking for a clear sky and galactic events, you need a few tools. Most of them are mobile apps, anyway. Statistically (From the times I've been there), you'd see shooting stars throughout the night, but it starts getting intense by 21:00.

If you didn't see anything, it's just that luck wasn't in your side this time. Try again later. Don't be discouraged.

- **Meteor showers:**

If your main objective is to see a meteor shower and shooting stars, then downloading "Meteor Shower Calendar" is necessary. This app tells you what the closest meteor shower is, when it starts and ends, and the moon phase of its peak.



- **Stellarium**

Stellarium is a website that has a software (And web port of it, so you don't have to download it). You can simulate the sky at a given time and location and search for comets and other things (Like satellites and the ISS) to see if they'd be visible. This tool is handy to determine the general area of a possible meteor shower.



- **Weather and moon phase**

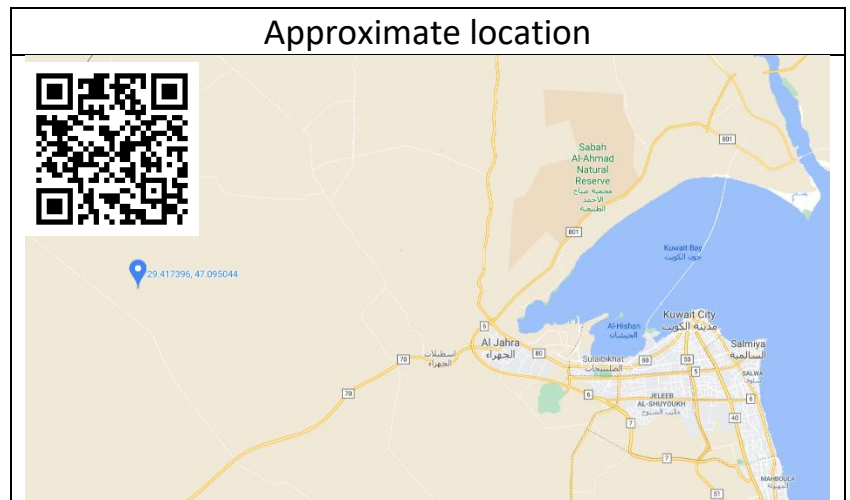
There are many websites and apps where you can see weather updates and such. Kuwait Meteorology App shows visibility, wind speed, and temperature per station.



You should also check for the moon phase when you go there. The bigger the moon, the fewer stars you'd see. So time it where you'd be there when the moon is the least bright. There are many moon phase calendar apps around, so pick the one you're comfortable using since there are no significant functionalities differences.

# Where to go? How to get there? What to drive?

There's no exact location, but here's a pin and a QR code provided in the side to give a general idea on where to go. You can, of course, go exactly there, or go anywhere around it. The desert is vast, so there's plenty of space.



More descriptively:

1. Take the Sixth Ring Road towards Al-Jahra (It'd be a long drive).
2. Take a right when you intersect with the 70-road to exit (The sign has "Al-Salmi" on it), then keep left.
3. Keep on driving until you see a sign that says "Saudi Arabia in 60km".
4. Take the right exit right after the yellow-black hairpins.
5. Keep driving straight, the road will turn left.
6. Keep on going straight for five minutes, then exit the road to your right.
7. Find a nice spot and settle.

## NOTES:

- There's soft sand by the side of the road at the end for maybe 10 meters. To avoid sinking in, don't floor the gas peddle. Just keep it steady at 20 ~ 40 kmph for a few seconds until you get out of the soft sand batch then you're safe. Get a second car if you're worried and a towing cable.
- The area is clean. So please keep it as clean and clear so others would enjoy it.
- Please don't do any illegal practices. We don't want this spot to be restricted.
- Don't be surprised if border control visited you. Just explain what you're doing and be cooperative, and things will be fine. It only happened to me once. But I can't blame them; I've been followed by ~36 cars, things looked suspicious. (Proud moment)

# How to prepare for the trip?

I've been organizing these trips for years, and I always miss a thing or two (Luckily though, it doesn't ruin the trip for me). So here's a list of things you'd probably want to prepare and bring along:

- Consumables:
  - Chips.
  - Meats.
  - Chocolates.
  - Candies.
  - Drinks.
  - Water.
  - Buns.
  - Cheese.
  - Ketchup.
  - Mayonnaise.
  - Mustard.
  - Noodles.
  - Tea.
  - Coffee.
  - Sugar.
- Comfort:
  - Mats.
  - Airbed.
  - Chairs.
  - Pillows.
  - Blankets.
  - Jackets.
  - Hoodies.
  - Scarfs.
  - Beanies.
- Hygiene:
  - Trash bags.
  - Soap.
  - Tissues.
  - Water.
  - Toilet paper.
  - Portable toilet.
  - Wet wipes.
- Fire stuff:
  - Coal.
  - Grill.
  - Firestarter.
  - Spatula.
  - Kettle.
  - Cutlery.
  - Cups.
  - Plates.
  - Lighter.
- Electronics:
  - Flashlight.
  - Batteries.
  - Phones.
  - Camera.
  - Headphones.
  - Speakers.
  - Charging cables.
- Camera stuff:
  - Camera.
  - Remote.
  - Release cable.
  - Batteries.
  - Memory cards.
  - Tripod.
  - Lens cap.
  - Camera lenses.

# How to camera? (Yes, that's not a typo, it's funny)

- Camera:

- Must be capable of taking at least 30 seconds long pictures.
- Must have a continuous mode.
- Sensor's sensitivity (ISO) is at least 3200.
- Must be able to lock continuous shots unattended (Release cable, mobile, remote, etc.).

- Lens:

- Anything from 200mm if you're interested in objects (Nebulas, moon, planets).
- Anything up to 18mm if you're interested in the sky (Milky Way, Shooting stars).
- The bigger the aperture (Smaller f-stops numbers), the better.

- Tripod:

Get one of those tripods with a hanger at the bottom to hang your heavy bag to make it even more stable.

- Now what?

- Focus at lights in the distance.
- Disable auto white balance
- Disable autofocus (And careful not to mess up your focus). Refocus if altered.
- Set to manual settings (Dial it to Manual).
- Set shutter speed to 30 seconds.
- Set ISO to 3200, and max your Aperture (Smallest f-stops number you can get).
- Point to where you like to shoot (Refer to apps mentioned above for positions).
- Take a few shots, adjust to your liking.
- When you're satisfied with the result, cover the lens and take a few dark shots.
- Lock your shutter to start clicking, and enjoy the night.





Taking a couple of shots with the lens cap generates dark images to register heat noise so you can subtract images from that dark image using software like Photoshop. It'll make your pictures cleaner.

## NOTE:

If you want to make a star trailing thing, point the camera at Polaris (North Star). Refer to the app for the position and orientation.

# This guide isn't enough! How can I reach you?

I'll be more than happy to help to the best of my ability. Please don't be discouraged from asking me questions, even if they're silly. Questions help me improving this guide for everyone's benefit. Below is a list of ways you can contact me:

Email	Twitter	Instagram	Reddit
			
<a href="mailto:iam@q8geek.com">iam@q8geek.com</a>	<a href="https://twitter.com/Q8GEEK">@Q8GEEK</a>	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/Q8GEEK">@Q8GEEK</a>	<a href="https://www.reddit.com/u/lolykinns">lolykinns</a>