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Summary

- Saudi Arabia is New Zealand's 24th most important market in terms of two-way trade, with New Zealand exports totalling \$753.3 million in 2019, a 12 percent increase over 2018. NZTE's Riyadh office reports a 70 percent increase in new deals signed in Saudi Arabia in the 2019 financial year.
- The 'giga projects' currently being implemented as part of Saudi Arabia's [Vision 2030](#) economic reform agenda provide niche opportunities for New Zealand exporters in areas such as conservation, tourism and hospitality training.
- Saudi Arabia's market is liberalising. It climbed 30 places in the World Bank's [Ease of Doing Business Index](#) in 2019. Recent reforms to streamline business procedures have benefited New Zealand companies, and the introduction of an e-visa has largely resolved one of the biggest issues our companies faced when trying to do business in the Kingdom.

Report

This report draws on public sources in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, industry events, and discussions with CEOs and key project staff from the Kingdom's 'giga' projects – the centrepiece of Saudi Arabia's ambitious Vision 2030 agenda.

Saudi Arabia is undergoing a period of massive economic and social change. As the Kingdom's 'giga' projects move from strategy-setting to implementation, significant opportunities are emerging for New Zealand businesses.

Several of the largest projects include a significant **conservation** element. We have identified opportunities in national park management, marine conservation, licensing, concessions and enforcement ("fees and fines").

New Zealand's global success in **tourism** and **adventure tourism** development is of interest to Saudi tourism authorities. There is potential to leverage New Zealand's strengths in a range of related fields from tourism infrastructure and attractions, adventure tourism operation, cultural tourism and animal encounters. There may be opportunities in the regulatory environment based on New Zealand's experience protecting the ecological environment and management of health and safety concerns.

With a significant number of new hotels and restaurants planned across the Kingdom (the Red Sea Development Company alone plans to offer an additional 8,000 luxury hotel rooms), there is an immediate and ongoing need for **hospitality training** and internships both inside the Kingdom, and in countries like New Zealand.

We expect there will be an ongoing need for **construction** and **management consulting** contractors for Vision 2030 projects. Niche and specialist technology is also of interest to giga projects, many of which will have world-leading technology at the heart of their development.

Elsewhere in the Kingdom, opportunities continue to emerge in areas such as **groundwater management, livestock improvement, health systems** (including electronic records), and mass **sports participation**.

Ease of doing business

Some companies have been cautious about coming to the Kingdom due to concerns over ease of doing business. However, over the past 12 months we are seeing a steady increase in New Zealand businesses wanting to engage. This interest responds to significant reforms made by Saudi Arabia both in terms of ease of doing business and openness to global trading partners and relationships.

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The 'giga' projects

The Red Sea Project: This tourism destination is located 500km north of Jeddah and has a total allocated project area of over 34,000km². Planned adventure and leisure activities will be governed by environmental regulations for ecosystem preservation. Expected completion date: 2030. Website: <https://www.theredsea.sa/en>

Qiddiya: Located 40km from Riyadh, Qiddiyah will be built around six integrated clusters covering some 300 activities. These include sports, winter and water activities, safaris, adventure activities, and theme parks. It is expected to be completed in 2031. Website: <https://qiddiya.com/>

NEOM: NEOM is a planned cross-border city project will intended to provide housing and facilities for a million people. It will be located in the northwestern region of Saudi Arabia and is expected to be completed in 2025. Website: <https://www.neom.com/en-us/#what-is-neom>

Amaala: This 3,800km² project is intended to serve as an "uber-luxury" wellness tourism destination. It will be located on Saudi Arabia's northwestern coastline, and is expected to create 22,000 jobs. Developments are said to include a dedicated airport, 2,500 luxury hotel rooms, 200 retail establishments, art galleries, marinas, and 700 villas. Completion is expected in 2028. Website: <https://www.amaala.com/>

AIUla: AIUla is a proposed open-air museum and cultural centre expected to cover 22,561km². The development will include cultural sites, museums and wildlife reserves. Plans also include a luxury resort, set to open in 2023. The resort will include a summit centre, residential estates, restaurants, and a spa. It is expected to be completed in 2035. Website: <https://www.rcu.gov.sa/en/>

Ad Diriyah: Ad Diriyah is a tourist destination where 30 new hotels are planned. There are also plans to construct the world's largest Islamic museum. Ad Diriyah opened in 2020 and its first hotel will open in 2021. Website: <https://dgda.gov.sa/Home.aspx>

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