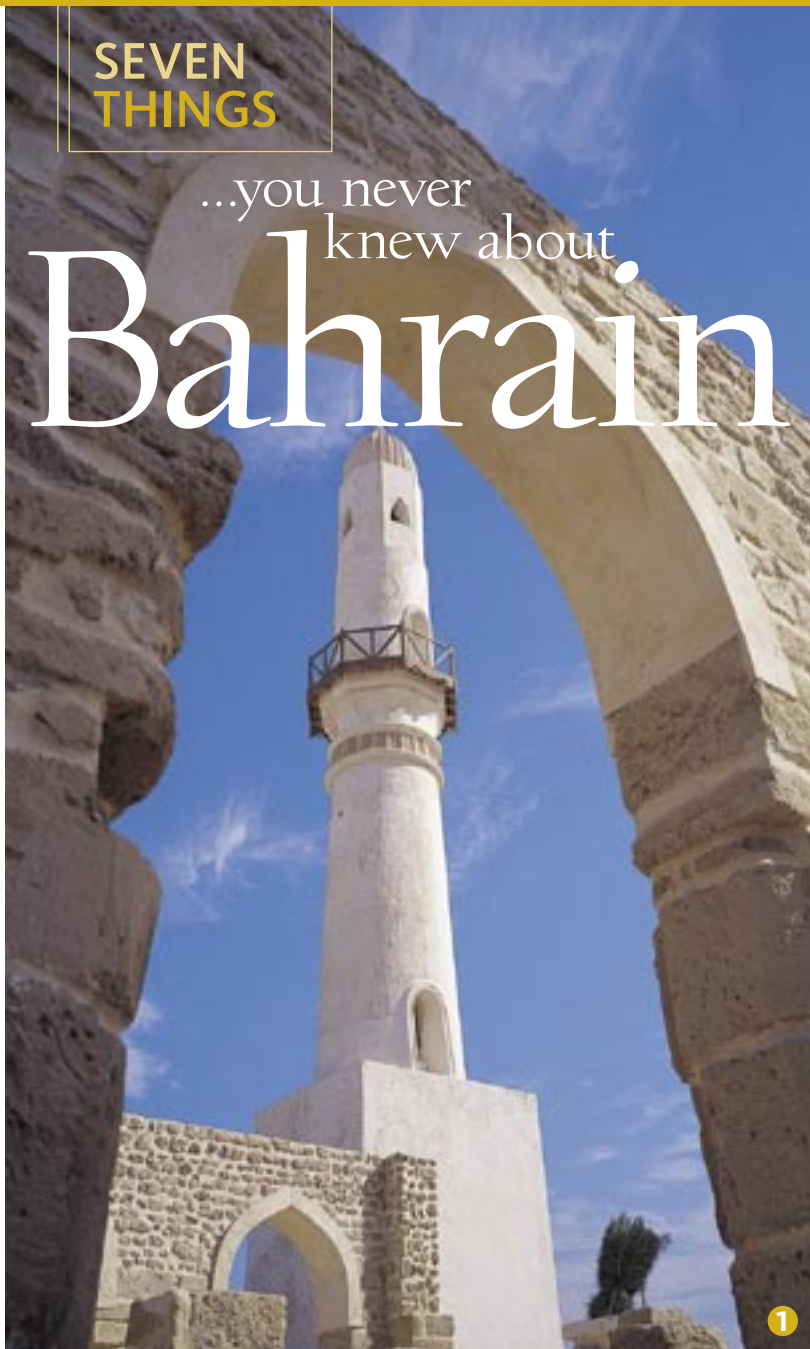


SEVEN THINGS

...you never knew about.

Bahrain



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1. SACRED GROUND Bahrain's architecture, as well as many points of interest, reflect its rich spiritual history. The Khamis Mosque (above), which dates back to A.D. 692, is believed to be the oldest mosque in the Arab world. Bahrain also is thought to have the world's largest prehistoric burial ground, containing 170,000 mounds.

2. BUY, SELL, TRADE The "soukh," Bahrain's central market, is just 10 minutes from The Ritz-Carlton, Bahrain Hotel & Spa. Opened in 1978, it offers clothing, jewelry, spices and local produce. And an unexpected twist—bartering is expected. If that's not your thing, the Seef Mall (seef.net), with more than 220 stores including Givenchy, BCBG Max Azria, Alfred Dunhill and Montblanc, is practically across the street from The Ritz-Carlton.

3. PEARLS OF WISDOM For centuries, Bahrain's pearling industry was the main staple of its economy. But when Japanese cultured pearls were introduced in 1930, the value of natural pearls declined sharply. Today, it's actually illegal to sell cultured pearls in Bahrain—and the natural variety remain highly prized.



4. ALL BETS ARE OFF The Sakhir Race Course, which seats 3,000 equestrian fans, runs an average of six races a day from October through April. The racing is just for entertainment, though—betting is strictly prohibited.



5. MYSTERY OF LIFE A must-see for visitors, the Tree of Life is an ancient mesquite tree located in the middle of the desert. What is its source of water? That's the mystery.

6. FORE! The Riffa Golf Club, just 25 minutes from The Ritz-Carlton, Bahrain Hotel & Spa, boasts a 6,817-yard course spread over approximately 160 acres. Bahrain's first international 18-hole grass golf course, it's open to members and the public alike.

7. ULTIMATE EXCLUSIVITY The Kingdom of Bahrain is an archipelago of 33 islands. Most of the attractions are on the main island of Bahrain. The Ritz-Carlton, Bahrain Hotel & Spa is located on the main island but also has its own private island where guests can relax. And now open is The Ritz-Carlton, Bahrain Villas & Spa, 22 three-bedroom hideaways that each include a "private lifestyle butler."
BY STEPHANIE CONNER



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