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HISTORIC JEDDAH, THE GATE TO MAKKAH



JANUARY 2013

SAUDI COMMISSION FOR
TOURISM AND ANTIQUITIES

NOMINATION DOCUMENT
FOR THE INSCRIPTION ON
THE WORLD HERITAGE LIST

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

HISTORIC JEDDAH, THE GATE TO MAKKAH

state Party

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

state, Province or Region

Makkah al-Mukarramah Region

geographical coordinates to the nearest second

Centre of the nominated property:
21°29'02" North
39°11'15" East

The nominated property is identified by the following four points:

North: 21°29'21" N — 39°11'09" E
South: 21°28'54" N — 39°11'16" E
East: 21°29'09" N — 39°11'23" E
West: 21°29'16" N — 39°11'19" E

The buffer zone is identified by the following four points:

North: 21°29'33" N — 39°11'26" E
South: 21°28'48" N — 39°10'55" E
East: 21°29'07" N — 39°11'35" E
West: 21°29'16" N — 39°10'52" E

name of Property

Historic Jeddah, the Gate to Makkah

textual description of the boundary(ies) of the nominated property

The nominated property extends over an area of 179.000 m², and comprises about one third of the area originally circled by the city walls. It extends over the central sector of the old city, and covers sectors of three historic quarters: Sham, Mazloum and Yemen.

The nominated property includes the ensemble of the preserved urban fabric of the old city, East of Dahab Street, till the historic limits of the old city to the East. It has an elongated shape with a maximum length of about 1,000 meters and a maximum width of some 600 meters.

The nominated property develops along three main axis: the two historic West-East souks, and a North-South commercial spine linking Madinah Gate with the southern limit of the old city. It is entirely surrounded by a large buffer zone that extends over the remaining parts of the old city and the neighbouring residential and commercial areas.

map of the nominated property, showing boundaries and buffer zone

see A3 size map, scale 1:5,000, page vi-vii.



Criteria under which property is nominated

The nomination of *Historic Jeddah, the Gate to Makkah* for inscription on the World Heritage List is based upon criteria (ii), (iv) and (vi).

Criterion (ii)

“exhibit an important interchange of human values, over a span of time or within a cultural area of the world, on developments in architecture or technology, monumental arts, town-planning or landscape design”

Criterion (iv)

“be an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history”

Criterion (vi)

“be directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas, or with beliefs, with artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance”

Draft Statement of Outstanding Value

a) Brief synthesis

(i) Summary of factual information

Historic Jeddah, the Gate to Makkah is an urban property extending over a surface of 17 hectares in the heart of the old city of Jeddah, the second largest Saudi city on the Red Sea coast. The nominated property is surrounded by a large buffer zone covering some 113 hectares.

The old city of Jeddah represents a unique development of the Red Sea architectural tradition — a constructive style once common to cities on both coasts of the Red Sea, of whom only scant vestiges are preserved outside the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the nominated property — characterized by the imposing tower houses decorated by large wooden roshan-s built in the late 19th century by the city’s mercantile elites.

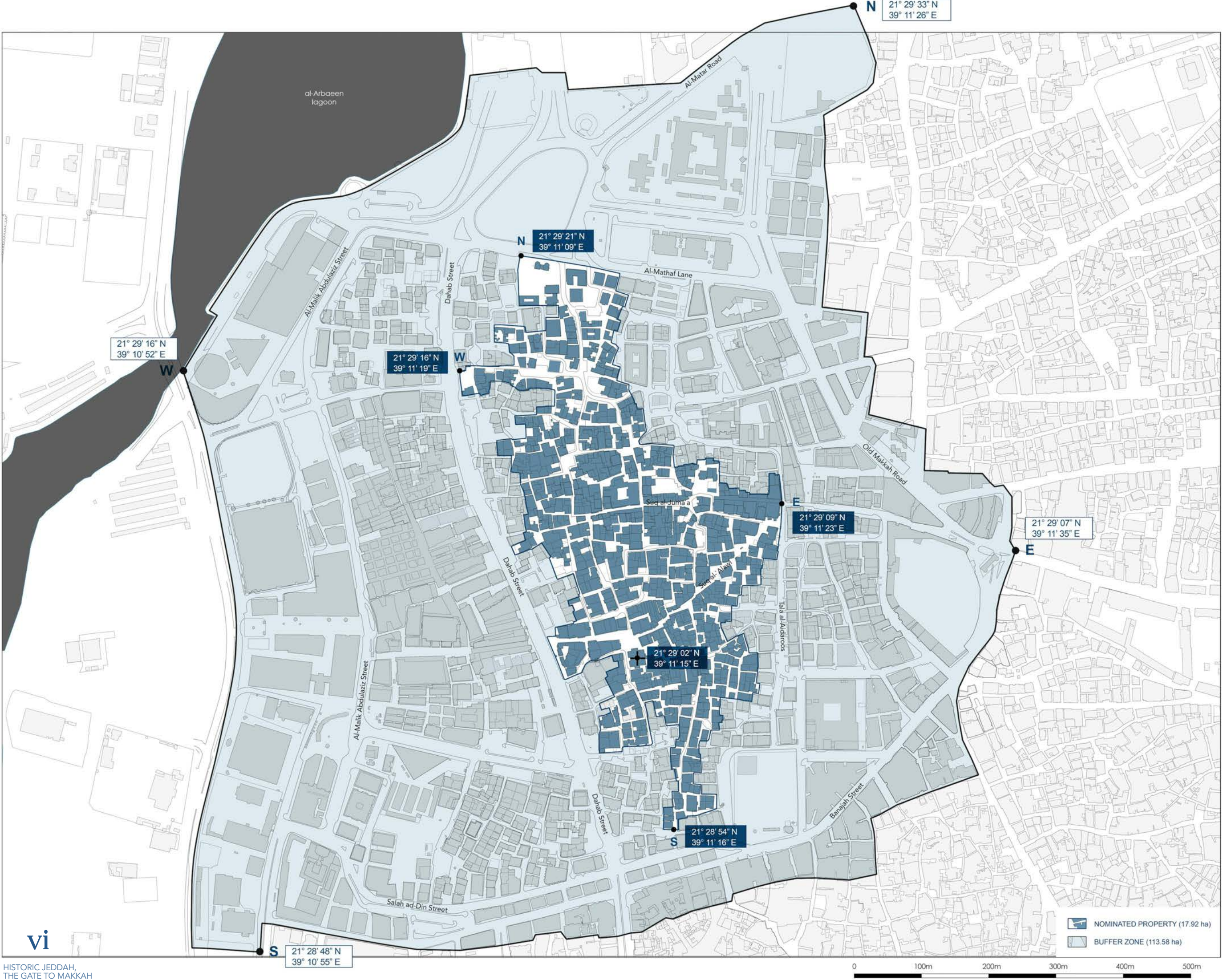
Its strict association with the Muslim annual pilgrimage (*hajj*) gave *Historic Jeddah, the Gate to Makkah* a cosmopolitan population where Muslims from Asia, Africa and the Middle East resided and worked contributing to the city’s growth and prosperity.

(ii) Summary of qualities

The Outstanding Universal Value of *Historic Jeddah, the Gate to Makkah* relates to its unique development of the Red Sea architectural style, to its preserved urban fabric, and to its symbolic role as a gate to Makkah for Muslim pilgrims reaching Arabia by boat throughout the centuries.

Historic Jeddah tower houses, decorated by large and complex wooden casements (*roshan-s*), are an outstanding evolution of the lower coral houses that characterized most of the cities on the two coasts of the Red Sea since the 16th century.

The nominated property is the last surviving urban centre of this cultural region that still preserve its original urban fabric. An extraordinary pre-modern urban environment where isolated tower houses, lower coral stone houses, mosques, ribat-s, souks and small public squares compose a vibrant space, inhabited by a multicultural population, that still plays a major symbolic and economic role in the life of the modern metropolis.



map of the
nominated property,
showing boundaries
and buffer zone
(A3 scale 1:5000);
RC Heritage/SCTA,
2012

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b) Justification for criteria

Criterion (ii):

The cityscape of *Historic Jeddah, the Gate to Makkah* is the result of an important exchange of human values, technical know-hows, building materials and techniques across the Red Sea region and along the Indian Ocean routes between the 16th and the early 20th centuries. It represents a cultural world that thrived thanks to international sea trade, possessed a shared geographical, cultural and religious background, and built settlements with specific and innovative technical and aesthetic solutions to cope with the extreme climatic conditions of the region (humidity and heat). Jeddah was for centuries the most important, the largest and the richest among these settlements and today *Historic Jeddah, the Gate to Makkah* is the last surviving urban site along the Red Sea coast still preserving the ensemble of the attributes of this culture: commercial-based economy, multi-cultural environment, isolated outward-oriented houses, coral masonry construction, precious woodwork decorating the façades, and specific technical devices to favouring internal ventilation.

Criterion (iv):

Historic Jeddah, the Gate to Makkah is the only surviving urban ensemble of the Red Sea cultural world. Jeddah's roshan tower houses are an outstanding example of a typology of buildings unique within the Arab and Muslim world. Their specific aesthetic and functional patterns — absence of courtyard, decorated roshan façades, ground floor rooms used for office and commerce, rooms rented for pilgrims — reflect their adaptation to both the hot and humid climate of the Red Sea and to the specificity of Jeddah, the Gate to the Holy City of Makkah for the pilgrims arriving by sea, and an important international commercial pole. The development of the roshan tower houses in the second half of the 19th century, illustrates the evolution of the patterns of trade and pilgrimage in the Arabian Peninsula and in Asia, following the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 and the development of steamboat navigation routes linking Europe with India and East Asia. Jeddah's tower houses extraordinary relevance is further increased by the fact that they are not only unique within the Red Sea cultural region, but they are also the sole remnants of an architectural typology born in Jeddah that, at the end of the 19th century, spread to the nearby Hijazi cities of Madinah, Makkah and Taif from where it has since completely disappeared under the pressure of modern development.

Criterion (vi):

Historic Jeddah, the Gate to Makkah is directly associated, both at the symbolic intangible level and at the architectural and urban level with the *hajj*, the yearly Muslim pilgrimage to the Holy City of Makkah. Jeddah was the landing harbour for all the pilgrims that reached Arabia by sea, and for centuries, up to the present, the city lived in function of the pilgrimage. The goods the pilgrims brought with them from Asia and Africa and sold in the city, the religious debates with ulama-s from Java and India, the spices, the food and the intangible heritage of the city were all related to the pilgrimage that has immensely contributed to defining the identity of Jeddah. The association with the hajj is also very evident in the urban structure of the nominated property, that include the traditional souks running East-West from the sea to Makkah Gate, the *ribat*-s and the *wakala*-s that used to host the pilgrims; in the architecture, notably in the façades and internal structure of the houses; and in the very social fabric of the city, where Muslims from all over the world mingled, lived, and worked together. The ensemble of these elements, tangible and intangible, demonstrates the intimate and long-lasting connection between the pilgrimage and the nominated property, and is an example of the very rich cultural diversity resulting from this religious event unique in the whole Islamic World.



c) Statement of Integrity

The nominated property, covers about one third of the original walled-in city and contains the ensemble of the attributes that convey its Outstanding Universal Value, such as the main examples of Jeddah's roshan tower houses, outward-oriented houses, coral masonry construction, precious woodwork decorating the façades and specific technical devices for internal ventilation, that jointly compose a coherent traditional urban settlement. Furthermore *Historic Jeddah, the Gate to Makkah* is an urban environment boasting a strong trade-based economy intimately associated, both at the symbolic intangible level and at the architectural and urban level, with the hajj, and a multi-cultural social fabric where Muslims from all over the world live and work together. Its 179.000 m² represent an adequate size to ensure the complete representation of the features and processes conveying its significance. Notwithstanding the inevitable decay of the historic structures, and the overall evolution its urban surroundings, the nominated property still possesses all the necessary attributes complying with the concept of “intactness”, including the commercial processes, the social relationships and the dynamic functions essential to define its distinctive character.

d) Statement of Authenticity

Historic Jeddah, the Gate to Makkah is a living urban environment primarily hosting residential and commercial activities, with mosques and charitable structures. The nominated property represents an authentic and traditional urban environment where are still concentrated the headquarters of century-old economic enterprises, retail shops, traditional souks, small cafés, popular restaurants, and street food sellers. A surprisingly rich human environment where Yemeni, Sudanese, Somali, Pakistani and Indian immigrant workers buy and sell their products to Saudi and non-Saudi clients in crowded traditional souks. Far from a frozen and dead tourist attraction, the nominated property is an authentic

sector of the city that still fully conveys the image of what this Red Sea commercial and pilgrimage city used to be. Its historic houses have not been substantially altered by modern additions and in-depth transformations, and the high "roshan tower houses" from the second half of the 19th century are mostly well preserved. Historic mosques have preserved their function and role for the community and most of their original features. Buildings have only been subject to minor maintenance that has rarely reached the original masonries and their embedded wooden beams, preserving the overall authenticity of the site.

e) Requirements for protection and management

The general strategy for the preservation and revitalization of the area has been drawn by the Saudi Commission for Tourism and Antiquities (SCTA) in coordination with Jeddah Municipality and the participation of the civil society. The daily management of the nominated property is the responsibility of the local branches of the Municipality of Jeddah and of the SCTA, located in the heart of the old city. Their staff is in charge of supervising maintenance, cleaning, protection and presentation of the site. A parallel, traditional system, depending from the Ministry of Interiors, is responsible of the social welfare of the population and of the security arrangements in the area in coordination with the Police and the fire brigade. This traditional mechanism, based on the charismatic figure of the *`umdah-s*, permits to reach the ensemble of the population and to involve merchants' and owners' associations in the management of the property.

The preservation of the Outstanding Universal Value of the site is guaranteed by the new Urban Regulations approved by Jeddah Municipality that set precise and strict obligations when dealing with historic buildings and empty plots within the nominated property and its buffer zone.

Among the key long-term requirements for the protection and management of the property, the reduction of the rate of decay of the historic houses, often abandoned and squatted by poor immigrants, and the control of the speculative moves that jeopardize the ensemble of the historic city represent the most relevant priorities. The new urban regulations define standard and official rules that can be verified and implemented on site. The involvement of merchants and owners, and the punctual restoration and revitalization projects, are expected to set a new virtuous circle and to tackle the most significant threats to the property, reducing its vulnerability to negative developments that could affect its authenticity and integrity on the medium and long term.

name and contact information of official local institution/agency

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