

**Stamps commemorating
The Expo of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia - Yesterday and Today,
in Cairo, Egypt**

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In 1987, The Expo of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia - Yesterday and Today was shown in Cairo, Egypt. The government issued two commemorative stamps (Scott 1047-1048) to celebrate this event. Before I address the set of two stamps, I would like to give the reader some background information about the expo.

The Saudis had been trying to modernize their country for decades. They had invested billions of Saudi Riyals into modernizing their infrastructure. They worked hard to improve their roads, bridges, railways, water supply, electrical grids and telecommunications. They also worked diligently to enhance their social services, and every aspect of living for the people within the country.

The Saudis felt like they had made great strides in modernizing their country. They wanted to find a way to highlight their success. What better way to showcase the boom than to conduct an expo?

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In this expo, the Saudis would highlight their past lives and their present lives in order to show the progressive growth they had achieved. They also wanted to show the world some of their traditions that were unknown to most outsiders.

At first, the Municipality of Riyadh created an expo. It was held at the King Saud University in Riyadh, the capital of Saudi Arabia. This expo was open for a period of time, and then it was exhibited in the United Arab Emirates.

Due to the success of the expo, it was believed that a more extensive expo was needed. Then, The Expo of Riyadh - Yesterday and Today was held at three different cities in Germany: Cologne, Stuttgart and Hamburg.

After Germany, there was a royal directive to exhibit the Riyadh Expo in other European capitals. The expo ended up being shown at the Olympia Exhibition Center in London and at the Grand Palais des Champs-Elysees in Paris as well.

During the expo's European tour, another royal directive was issued to change the name of the Riyadh Expo to The Expo of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia - Yesterday and Today, or Saudi Expo for short. By doing so, the whole country would be highlighted and not just Riyadh.

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After traveling in Europe, the Saudi Expo ended up in Cairo, Egypt. It was held on the Exhibition Grounds in Nasr City. It took up four, huge halls. Additional sections had to be added in order to show the agriculture and Saudi publications. The industrial section needed to be enlarged as well, due to an abundance of extra products. The enormous size of the Saudi expo had sections that included representations of the country's past heritage and its modern, contemporary new ways of life.

In Cairo, the Saudi Expo opened on the Hijri date 21 Shawwal 1407 corresponding to the Gregorian date of June 17, 1987. It lasted for twenty days.

In honor of the Saudi Expo in Cairo, the Directorate General of Posts in the Ministry of Posts, Telegraphs & Telephones of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia designed 50-halalas (Figure 1) and 75h (Figure 2) commemorative stamps. These were issued on the same day the Saudi Expo opened and they were also available at the expo.



Figure 1



Figure 2

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The two stamps are very affordable. Volume 6A of the 2022 Scott Standard Postage Stamp Catalogue provides a retail value of \$2.40 for a set of two mint, never-hinged stamps in the grade of very fine. A used set is valued at \$1.05.

The Government Security Printing Press in Riyadh printed the stamps by lithography on white, unwatermarked paper. They are perforated gauge 12. The quantity issued was not large at 800,000 sets in sheets of fifty.

The stamps are multicolored and vertically formatted. They share the same bilingual inscriptions, in Arabic and English.

In the upper right corner is the Saudi Arabia national emblem. It consists of two crossed swords with a palm tree above the two blades. As of 1982, the Saudi government began using the country's national emblem on its stamps, rather than writing out the kingdom's name.

In the upper left corner is the Hijri year 1407. It is horizontal and written in Arabic. This year shares its number '1' with the Gregorian year date (1)987, that is reading down.

In the lower corners are the denomination and currency, in English at left and in Arabic at right.

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At the bottom center is the name of the event in Arabic. The words read 'The Expo of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Between Yesterday and Today, Cairo.'

Both stamps depict the same design with an attractive ornate border around it. While the border is brown-orange on the 50h stamp, it is in light blue on the 75h denomination.

The background shows one of the massive and magnificent Giza pyramids. This phenomenal work of art and engineering is famous around the globe. The pyramid was used to show that the Saudi Expo was held in beautiful Egypt.

In front of the pyramid is a view of King Khalid International Airport. Situated about 22 miles north of Riyadh, this is the second largest airport in the world in terms of land area. It was opened on November 16, 1983, and it serves the City of Riyadh.

In front of the airport is the very identifiable Riyadh TV Tower. Located in Riyadh, the construction of this tower was finished in 1978. Being 560 feet high, this tower is an amazing sight to look at.

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The King Khalid International Airport and the Riyadh TV Tower are separated by a white space from the silhouettes of old, mud structures that are clearly a part of Saudi Arabia's past. Much like the adobe homes of the American southwest, these old, mud structures were the homes and the businesses of years past for the Saudi people.

These stamps can be found in mint, never-hinged condition, hinged condition, and unused without gum. Stamps with pristine gum are the choice for collectors.

In mint condition, the stamps can be found in singles, pairs, blocks of four, larger multiples as well as in complete sheets of fifty.

The stamps are known on commercial covers. They can also be found postally used on or off paper in singles or multiples.

Cancelled-to-order examples from both denominations exist on or off paper. A set of complete sheets is known cancelled-to-order in Riyadh.

Addressed and unaddressed philatelic covers with these two stamps exist. Some of the addressed covers have gone through the mail and have receiving marks. An originally unaddressed philatelic cover is known where the address was added later by hand.

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This set is popular among the collectors of the stamps of the middle east and among those topical collectors who seek pyramids on stamps.

This stamp set does an excellent job blending the past with the present. There's nothing wrong with wanting to highlight a country's own advancement. The Saudis have always been known to be a proud country. These stamps were a simple way to show their pride and promote their heritage. Knowing the story behind this stamp set makes it worth adding to your collection.

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Complete sheet of 50h

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