

# Qatar – As Independent as You Are

Located halfway along the western coast of the Arabian Gulf, the State of Qatar acts as a bridge between East and West welcoming visitors from around the world. At the cross roads of economic, cultural and natural heritage, the strategic location of the country has attracted visitors to the region for thousands of years.



With sprawling dunes in the south, sandy coastlines and islets, reefs and salt flats, the small peninsular-nation offers as much natural beauty as it does cultural richness. Surrounded by a 563-km coastline, Qatar has always been a sea-dedicated community. From a center for fishing and pearling trades in the days gone by, Qatar's identity has been shaped by an age-old sea oriented civilization, hosting travelers as guests. Highlighting its authentic heritage and rich past, while installing pride in its future, Qatar is a center of both tradition and innovation.

Today Qatar is leading a surge in interest in the Arabian Gulf. Although conveniently accessible via a short flight on most international carriers, including the 5-star Qatar Airways, the unique atmosphere of Qatar makes it feel as though you are truly off the beaten path.

The autumn and winter months promise a calendar packed with world-class cultural attractions, international sporting events and exciting activities for the whole family. Inspiring a new generation of

filmmakers in the Gulf Region, the Tribeca Film Festival comes to Doha in late October featuring around thirty films, many written or directed by Middle Eastern filmmakers. The Waqif Art Center in the center of the authentic Souq Waqif is the host to many local and regional art exhibitions during this period. The spacious Doha Exhibitions Center will be the venue for many acclaimed regional and international trade fairs including the exhibitions showcasing products made in Turkey, the United States and Qatar, as well as the well-anticipated annual Jewelry and Watches Exhibition in early 2010. For sports enthusiasts, the Khalifa International Tennis & Squash Complex will be the venue for the Sony/Ericsson WTA Championship in November and the Qatar ExxonMobil Open men's championship in January. Qatar is also featured on the European golf tour with the Commercialbank Qatar Masters Golf Tournament in January.



However, no trip to Qatar would be complete without experiencing the country's year-round attractions. The capital city of Doha is home to the I.M. Pei-designed Museum of Islamic Art, which boasts one of the largest and finest collections of pieces from one of the world's great civilizations. For those looking for a truly genuine Arabian experience, the vast deserts of Qatar promise adventure through camel back safaris and nights beneath the stars. Or, shoppers and explorers are encouraged to get lost in the authentically preserved Arabian souqs while discovering local treasures. The sprawling ASPIRE Zone, main venue for the 15th Asian Games in 2006, is an impressive multi-purpose facility offering both local and international visitors access to world-class sports facilities and activities, high-end retail shopping and luxurious green parks for relaxation and for family enjoyment.

Many of the world's top luxury hotels are open in Qatar – with the most recent additions including the W-Hotel and Grand Hyatt Doha. The hotels' luxurious spas and variety of exceptional dining experiences, touched with Arabian influences, offer a quiet and relaxing respite from the charged activities of the day.

Aside from the myriad of attractions and activities, Qatar has developed a solid infrastructure for progress and innovation, becoming known not only as a destination for travelers, but also as a center for business, education and research. Qatar is home to Education City, an impressive undertaking which hosts six world-class universities, all branch campuses of prestigious international institutions. The Qatar Science and Technology Park is a local home for technology-based companies from around the world and an incubator for start-ups enterprises. Known as the founder of free speech in the Middle East, Qatar is home to Al Jazeera, the first independent Arabic news channel in the world. When launched 13 years ago, Al Jazeera broke the monopoly on State controlled media in the region, providing an outlet for conversation and debate throughout the Middle East.



Although the State of Qatar is emerging as a global leader in industry and tourism, the country is still a work in progress and is continually looking to the future as it expands upon its heritage. In the next years a new Doha International Airport will open to welcome the estimated 50 million passengers who will come through once completed. Qatar's largest single real estate development, Lusail, is currently underway. When complete, Lusail will cover over 35 square kilometers and will accommodate up to 200,000 people. Always planning for the future, The State of Qatar has dedicated endless resources and energy into progressive and innovative development ideas and tools.

Whatever your interests, Qatar has something for everyone – from business travelers looking for a break between meetings, to backpackers eager for unique desert adventures, to families hoping to relax on a luxurious beach.

### **\$17 billion for tourism infrastructure**

The Qatar Tourism and Exhibitions Authority estimates a total of \$17 billion to be spent on tourism infrastructure over the next five years to support the increase in hotel supply, and thus increase the current leisure segment from 5% to up to 30% of total demand.

Date: 2009-09-28

Article link:

<https://www.tourism-review.com/travel-tourism-magazine-qatar-independent-as-you-are-article983>