



# Orientation Handbook

مدرسة اورينكس العالمية





# Table of contents

## **1. Discovering Qatar**

- About Qatar
- Qatar's vision
- The 2022 FIFA World Cup
- Sports
- Arts and culture

## **2. Living in Qatar**

- Social etiquette in Qatar
- The Holy Month of Ramadan
- Education in Qatar
- Getting around Qatar
- Accommodation
- Housing
- Shopping
- Classifieds
- Good to know

## **3. Final note**



# Discovering Qatar



# About Qatar

**Qatar brings together old world hospitality with cosmopolitan sophistication.**

Qatar has been an independent sovereign state since 1971. It is one of the six members of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), with the others being Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Oman and Bahrain.

Qatar is a peninsular country whose terrain comprises of arid desert and a long Arabian Gulf shoreline of beaches and dunes. Its capital, Doha is located on the coast and is known for its futuristic skyscrapers and other ultramodern architecture, which sits on the city's corniche waterfront promenade.

## **Official language**

Arabic is the official language in Qatar, but due to a large expatriate population, English is also widely spoken.

## **Religion**

Islam is the official religion of the country, and Sharia Law (Islamic Law) is a main source of its legislations.

## **Climate**

Qatar has a moderate desert climate with long hot summers, short mild winters and little rain. Summer in Doha is usually quite harsh with temperatures rising up to 50°C. Winters are much cooler and the nights can get a little chilly.

## **Major towns**

Doha, Al Wakrah, Al Khor, Dukhan, Al Shamal, Mesaieed, Ras Lafan and others.

## **Currency**

The official currency is the Qatari Riyal (QAR), which is divided into 100 dirhams. The exchange parity has been set at the fixed rate of USD 1 = QAR 3.64.

## **Qatar National Day**

Qatar National Day is celebrated on 18 December every year, in commemoration of Sheikh Jassim bin Mohammad Bin Thani, the founder of the State of Qatar.

## **Public holidays:**

- National Day: 18 December
- Eid Al-Fitr Holiday: Date changes every year
- Eid Al-Adha Holiday: Date changes every year
- Qatar National Sport Day: The second Tuesday of February



### **The Qatari flag**

- The white colour reflects the internationally recognised symbol of peace.
- The maroon colour symbolises the bloodshed during the several wars Qatar has undergone, particularly in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.
- The nine-point serrated line indicates that Qatar is the 9<sup>th</sup> member of the “reconciled Emirates” following the Qatari-British treaty in 1916.

### **National dress**

Qatari national men wear a thobe, a long white shirt over loose trousers. They also wear a loose headdress, called a ghutra, in white or red and white cloth, held on with a black rope known as the agal. Qatari national women cover their head with a black headdress called a shayla, and their body with a long black dress called an abaya. Some women also cover their face with a black niqab, leaving only their eyes uncovered.

### **Work hours**

Government offices: 07:00 to 13:00

Private companies have varying work timings and are set as per their business requirements. Private/retail establishments: 08:00 to 12:00, and 16:00 to 20:00. Also increasingly 08:00 to 16:00 and 09:00 to 17:00.

Friday and Saturday are weekend days, so timings for private/retail establishments may vary as per their business requirements.

### **Local time**

3 hours + GMT

### **Electrical current**

220 - 240 Volts. Primarily British BS-1363 and Indian-style sockets.

### **Telecommunications**

The country code for Qatar is +974. Telecom providers are Ooredoo, which provides mobile, wireless, wireline, and content services and Vodafone, which offers prepaid and post-paid mobile and internet services.

### **Medical and emergency matters**

There are no special inoculations required to enter Qatar. The quality of healthcare is generally very high with 24-hour emergency services, public and private health care clinics and hospitals, and many well-stocked pharmacies, which are easily available throughout Doha.

Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC) is the main provider of healthcare in Qatar and provides world-class Emergency Medical Services (EMS). Dial 999 for any emergencies.

All residents must have a Qatar health card, whether it is to complement your private insurance or to ensure proper medical care in the absence of private insurance. Having a health card ensures you get medical care for a lower price than usual at a government clinic or hospital.

For more information on health cards, visit [hamad.qa/EN/Patient-Information/How-To-Get-A-Health-Card/Pages/default.aspx](https://hamad.qa/EN/Patient-Information/How-To-Get-A-Health-Card/Pages/default.aspx)



**Safety:**

Although Qatar is continually ranked as one of the safest countries in the world, it is important to take proper precautions to ensure your safety and that of your property.

**Dial 999 for emergency services.**

Qatar is also strongly committed to continuous improvement in road safety by addressing vehicle standards, reducing roadside hazards, educating drivers, and effectively enforcing road laws to provide a safe environment for all its citizens.

Some important telephone numbers for your reference are:

Police, Civil Defense and Emergency	999
Water and Electricity Emergency	991
Accidents and Emergency - Hamad Hospital	4439 2111
Hamad Medical Corporation	4439 2222
Telephone Directory	180



## Qatar's vision

The country is currently focusing its efforts on the growth and development of its people. The rulers of Qatar envision a future for their nation where every individual has a high standard of living through healthcare, education and national leadership in key areas, including sustainable living.

Hence, through the year 2030, development in both the public and private sectors will be based on the following four principles:

### **Human development:**

The development and promotion of education among all to create a sustainable and prosperous society.

### **Social development:**

The development of a just and caring society, capable of playing a key role in establishing global partnerships.

### **Economic development:**

The development of a diversified economic base to secure and maintain a high standard of living in the future.

### **Environmental development:**

To maintain a balance between economic and social development and ways of protecting the environment.

## The 2022 FIFA World Cup

Qatar is hosting the 2022 FIFA World Cup, the quadrennial international Men's Football Championship contested by the national teams of the member associations of FIFA.

This will be the first time the World Cup will be held in the Middle East, in an Arab and Muslim country, and will involve 32 national teams, including the host nation.

Qatar Airways will have a major role to play in the 2022 FIFA World Cup, connecting more than 150 destinations to Doha. The World Cup is scheduled to be held in late November until mid-December 2022.

During those 28 days, the majority of Qatar Airways passengers will arrive in or depart from Doha. It will be an opportunity of a lifetime to show the world our traditional warm Arabian hospitality.



## Sports

Qatar is a sports-loving nation. In addition to traditional sports such as falconry, camel racing, horse racing, and traditional boat racing, which are avidly pursued by many Qataris, modern sports such as football, tennis, basketball, handball, volleyball, cricket and swimming are also popular.

Annual sporting events held in Doha include: ATP Tennis Tournament, Qatar Masters Golf Tournament, Moto GP Racing World Championships, Equestrian Global Champions Tour and WTA Tour Tennis Championships.

## Arts and culture

The State of Qatar is fast becoming a cultural destination in its own right. It aims to be known for world-class exhibitions and for its vibrant arts community. Doha has a number of wonderful museums sponsored by Qatar Museums where you will find an astonishing collection of European and regional art.

Qatar celebrates various communities by holding festivals and cultural events throughout the year. The Katara cultural village is home to many music and heritage events. Qatar Museums also holds an annual “Year of Culture” whereby a specific culture is celebrated throughout the year, marking the joint connections between Qatar and countries such as: Germany, China, Japan, the United Kingdom, Turkey and others.

For more updated information, visit the Qatar Museums at [qm.org.qa](https://qm.org.qa).





# Living in Qatar



# Social etiquette in Qatar

Qatar has made it a priority to protect and maintain its heritage and culture. With its foundation as a Muslim country, local traditions and practices still prevail and all residents are expected to be considerate and respectful of the country's culture and religious beliefs. The following tips may be useful:

## **Dress code**

While expats are not bound by the same dress code as Muslims, they should still be sensitive to Qatari ideas of decency.

- Women are expected to dress modestly so as not to offend the local community. Skirts, dresses and loose fitting pants should be knee-length, and tops and shirts should cover the midriff and shoulder areas.
- Men need to keep their wardrobe tasteful. Shorts should be knee-length and cut-off t-shirts should be avoided.
- Bathing suits and sportswear should only be worn in appropriate venues.

## **Alcohol consumption**

The following laws apply to alcohol and its consumption:

- It is illegal to import alcohol into the country. All luggage is scanned at the Arrivals Hall of Hamad International Airport.
- It is an offence to drink alcohol in unauthorised public places.
- Those who are caught breaking this law can be deported, fined and even receive prison sentences.
- Alcohol should not be transported within the country. For those who have a valid liquor permit, purchases should be taken directly home from the warehouse on collection.

- It is an offence to offer alcohol to Muslims and minors.
- For those who hold a valid liquor permit, it is illegal to donate or give away alcohol to others. It is only meant for personal consumption.

## **Buying and drinking alcohol**

- Alcohol is available in licensed restaurants and hotels, which may sell alcohol to adult, non-Muslim customers in restricted areas.
- Residents must show their Qatari ID card to be granted entry to a licensed venue.
- Expatriates living in Qatar can buy alcohol and other products via a permit system. The Qatar Distribution Company (QDC), a subsidiary of Qatar Airways Group, is the only licensed retail distributor in Qatar and has a wide range of beverages that can be purchased by qualifying private individuals.

## **Drinking and drugs:**

- Qatar has a zero-tolerance policy when it comes to driving under the influence of alcohol. Drunk driving offenders are punished by custodial sentences that can range from one month to three years, a fine, or both. Those caught driving under the influence of alcohol may also be deported.
- Recreational drugs are illegal in the State of Qatar and are against Qatar Airways company policy and should not be consumed by any employee at any time.
- Qatar Airways Group adopts and exercises a zero-tolerance policy for positive results of alcohol or drug testing of its employees on any of its premises.



# The Holy Month of Ramadan

## Anti-smoking law

Most public and closed places in Qatar have a no smoking law in force, so care should be taken to observe your surroundings. Qatar Airways too is committed to providing a smoke-free environment to its employees and visitors and follows a non-smoking policy on all of its premises. Employees may not smoke while wearing their company ID or be identifiable as a QR Group Employee (in uniform for example).

## More tips

- Always seek permission before taking photographs of people and be cautious about taking photographs in public and government places.
- Doha is a safe, family-friendly place to live, and single women do not need to be concerned when moving around the city at night. However, common sense should always apply.
- Use of obscene language, insulting someone publicly, slander, inappropriate hand gestures and public displays of affection are not acceptable in Qatari culture.
- Certain medications may be illegal in Qatar, so bring your prescription slip and a note from your physician.
- It is prohibited to bring in to Qatar indecent materials of all forms (books/magazines/movies/hard drives or similar) as well as alcohol and pork products.

## Your first Ramadan

Ramadan in Qatar is a unique time for both Muslims and non-Muslims and you will find that the usual patterns of work and leisure completely change. Your first Ramadan in Qatar will be a time of excitement no doubt, and as a new expat you will surely have a few practical questions on how to tackle the sudden change in routine.

All the rules on culture and etiquette in Qatar should be even more carefully observed during the Holy Month of Ramadan when Muslims around the world fast from dawn until sunset for 29 or 30 days, depending on when the crescent moon is sighted. It is a month of increased prayer, charity, reflection and renewal of friendships for the Muslim community.

## Working hours

The timings for government departments that serve the public change for the entire month. They run on a five-hour schedule during Ramadan, from **08:00 to 13:00** or **09:00 to 14:00** with some departments re-opening at night. Private sector employees usually work six hours per day, as per Qatar Labour Law.

Qatar Airways Group announces its Ramadan working hours to its employees, a few days before the onset of the Holy Month of Ramadan.



## Here's a brief guide on what to expect during the Holy Month of Ramadan:

### Shopping and business hours:

Shops, banks and mall hours will change and it's advisable to check before heading out of the house during Ramadan. Generally, malls will remain open late at night.

### Dining

Many restaurants remain closed until sunset, however a few may offer a delivery service. It is best to check directly with individual outlets. Also, hotel bars and pubs will be shut during Ramadan, as will Qatar's alcohol outlet, Qatar Distribution Company.

Breaking the fast is greatly significant for anyone fasting, and this is done through a nightly Iftar. There are plenty of good dining options around Doha, with many five-star hotels hosting elaborate Iftar or Suhoor buffets in beautifully decorated Ramadan tents.

### Entertainment

There will be lots of other ways to enjoy your first Ramadan in Qatar. Most activities are family-friendly and special events are held for children. On the 14th night of Ramadan, Qatari children take part in the tradition of Garangao by dressing up in traditional clothing and going out into the local neighbourhood to sing the Garangao song and collect sweets and nuts from neighbours. Locals and expats also enjoy watching a traditional cannon being fired outside the Mohammed Bin Abdul Wahab Mosque to mark the breaking of the fast each evening.

As an expat you are sure to be caught up in the spirit of Ramadan, but it is also a very solemn time and being culturally sensitive is important. Here are a few extra do's and don'ts to remember:

### Do's

- Greet Muslim colleagues and friends with 'Ramadan Kareem' (meaning a generous Ramadan) and 'Eid Mubarak' during the Eid celebrations.
- Everyone in Doha, including non-Muslims, observe a public fast. That means you may not consume food or drink in public, including in Qatar Airways' offices. You may excuse yourself to a private room or canteen to discretely consume food or water, but there should be no display of consumption in public out of respect for those who are fasting.
- Be careful on the roads, especially around the time of sunset and late evening as many people will be rushing to prayers or Iftar meals.
- Be careful to dress more conservatively during Ramadan.

### Don't

- Eat, drink, smoke or chew gum in public during the hours of fasting.
- Wear tight-fitting clothes or expose your legs and shoulders.
- Play loud music in your car or at home as it is considered a sign of disrespect.



# Education in Qatar

## Oryx International School

Oryx International School provides a nurturing community-based environment for the children of Qatar Airways employees. Managed by Orbital Education, the school offers the English National Curriculum from Foundation Stage 1 to Year 11 (aged 3 to 16). Our highly experienced team invests the time to get to know each child as individuals, enabling them to grow and develop to reach their potential.

The campus, which is located in Mesaimeer, provides state-of-the-art facilities for all academic programmes including science, technology, robotics and mathematics; as well as sport and the arts. We provide a Scholarship Programme to students in Year 7 – 10 who do not receive the education allowance, to apply go to [www.oryxschool.qa](http://www.oryxschool.qa)

For more information please contact [admissions@oryxschool.qa](mailto:admissions@oryxschool.qa) or call 4036 0085.

[www.oryxschool.qa](http://www.oryxschool.qa)

مدرسة أوريكس العالمية



## Qatar Foundation and Education City

Qatar Foundation brings world-class education, work experience and career opportunities to Qatar, enabling people of all ages to contribute to the country's future. Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser is the driving force behind the foundation and construction of Education City.

Located on the outskirts of Doha, the capital of Qatar, Education City covers 14 square kilometres and houses educational facilities from school age to research level and branch campuses of some of the world's universities.

More information can be found at [qf.org.qa/education](http://qf.org.qa/education).

## Other schools in Qatar

There are also many privately managed independent nursery, primary and high schools, and universities in Qatar.

The links below will guide you to a comprehensive list of all schools for children of various nationalities that offer different international curriculums. They include:

- [nurseriesinqatar.qa](http://nurseriesinqatar.qa)
- [edu.gov.qa/En/ServicesCenter/Pages/PrivateSchoolList](http://edu.gov.qa/En/ServicesCenter/Pages/PrivateSchoolList)
- [edarabia.com/schools/qatar](http://edarabia.com/schools/qatar)



# Getting around Qatar

It is relatively easy to get around in Qatar. Mowasalat, the transport company in Qatar, offers a variety of land transport services and solutions in and around Qatar including airport taxi, standard taxi, VIP limousines, standard limousines, public bus service and private hire bus and coach services. In addition, app-based taxi services such as **Uber and Careem** are also available.

## Airport taxi

This service offers station wagons that can seat up to six people. Airport taxis operate only to and from Hamad International Airport and are based at the airport taxi stand. They are available round the clock, every day, including public holidays.

## Car rental

To hire a car, there are a number of car rental agencies operating in Qatar. You can choose from global car rental brands such as Hertz, Dollar or Thrifty or you can go with local car rental agencies. If you are in Qatar on a visit visa, you can rent a car in Qatar with the driving licence you currently hold (regardless of the issuing country) for a maximum period of seven days.

If you have an International Driving Permit, you can drive a rental car in Qatar for up to six months, or until your visa status is changed from visitor to resident.

## Getting a Qatari driving licence

If you are planning on driving in Qatar, you must first visit the Traffic Department of the Ministry of Interior ([moi.gov.qa/site/english/departments/TrafficPolice/index.html](http://moi.gov.qa/site/english/departments/TrafficPolice/index.html)) within 15 days of arrival, to verify that your internationally issued licence is valid. You can then drive in Qatar on your home country licence for one week, after which you must apply for a temporary licence or a Qatar driving licence. International driver's licences are valid for six months.

To convert your current driving licence to a Qatar driver's licence, you will need to hold a Qatar Residence Permit and take a driving test.

To obtain a Qatari driving licence, the following documents must be presented at the Madinat Khalifa Traffic Department:

- Original licence from home country
- A letter of no objection/permission from your sponsor
- A copy of the trade licence of the sponsoring company
- A copy of sponsor ID
- Passport (original and copies)
- Three passport photos
- Qatari ID Card

The [hukoomi.qa](http://hukoomi.qa) website provides comprehensive information on the application procedures for obtaining a driving licence.



## Accommodation

There are several lodging options available in Doha for all budgets including well-known luxury hotels such as The Oryx Rotana Doha, Sheraton Grand Doha Resort & Convention Hotel, Doha Marriott Hotel and Movenpick Hotel Doha.

The links below will give you many more options:

- [agoda.com](https://www.agoda.com)
- [bookings.com](https://www.bookings.com)
- [hotels.com](https://www.hotels.com)

The Oryx Rotana Doha is Qatar Airways' preferred hotel partner because it is centrally located close to Qatar Airways Towers 2 and 3 and is just 10 minutes away from the city centre, Corniche and the West Bay business district areas.

Qatar Airways' employees are given special discounts and offers on food and stay at The Oryx throughout the year.

[rotana.com/rotanahotelandresorts/qatar/doha/oryxrotana](https://www.rotana.com/rotanahotelandresorts/qatar/doha/oryxrotana)

## Housing

Real estate agents can usually help find the most suitable accommodation and offer advice about the best locations. You can search on your own via the links below:

- [qatarpropertyplanet.com](https://www.qatarpropertyplanet.com)
- [propertyfinder.qa](https://www.propertyfinder.qa)
- [qatarliving.com.qa](https://www.qatarliving.com.qa)

Qatar Airways Group provides housing or a housing allowance to all of its employees depending on individual contracts. Refer to your offer letter for details.



## Shopping

There are many shopping options from small supermarkets and hypermarkets that are open all day and late at night for essentials to big air-conditioned malls, which offer a range of luxury goods and products.

Malls in Qatar are usually open from **10:00** to **22:00**, Saturday to Thursday. Most will be closed on Friday mornings but will open later in the day.

**The Landmark Mall**  
Al Shamal Road  
Gharaffa, Doha, Qatar  
Tel: 4487 5222  
[landmarkdoha.com](http://landmarkdoha.com)

**The Mall**  
D Ring Road, Shopping Complex  
Doha, Qatar  
Tel: 4467 8888  
[themalldoha.com](http://themalldoha.com)

**Hyatt Plaza**  
Al Waab street  
Al Aziziyah, Doha, Qatar  
Tel: 4499 9666  
[hyattplaza.com](http://hyattplaza.com)

**The Mall of Qatar**  
Al Rayyan  
Doha, Qatar  
Tel: 4034 6000  
[mallofqatar.com](http://mallofqatar.com)

**Villaggio**  
Al Waab Street Doha  
Al Aziziyah, Doha, Qatar  
Tel: 4413 5222  
[villaggioqatar.com](http://villaggioqatar.com)

**Doha City Centre**  
Al Dafna, Doha, Qatar  
Tel: 4493 3355  
[citycentredoha.com](http://citycentredoha.com)

## Classifieds

You can buy and sell virtually anything on Qatar's leading online classifieds websites. Whether you're looking for a reliable used car, need to find an apartment or buy or sell some household items, these sites are active and reliable online marketplaces for the exchange of goods and services. Residents routinely use these sites to secure necessities at bargain rates.

### Classifieds - All (Auto, electronics, clothing, furniture, etc.)

- [qatarcl.com](http://qatarcl.com)
- [qatarliving.com](http://qatarliving.com)
- [dubizzle.com](http://dubizzle.com)
- [iloveqatar.net](http://iloveqatar.net)
- [justlanded.com](http://justlanded.com)
- [qatardunia.com](http://qatardunia.com)
- [babqatar.net](http://babqatar.net)
- [bezaat.com](http://bezaat.com)
- [qatarday.com](http://qatarday.com)

### Auto Classifieds

- Cars in Doha
- HatlaZee
- Yallamotor
- carsemsar.com
- contactcars.com

### Informational

- [expatwoman.com](http://expatwoman.com)





## Good to know

- Exposure to extreme heat during the summer (usually between June and early October) may lead to sunburn or heat strokes due to dehydration. While outdoors, use sunscreen generously over all exposed areas of your skin and keep yourself hydrated.
- Never leave pets or children inside cars during the day, even if you are stepping out for just a few minutes. The temperatures inside the car can rise rapidly which may suffocate children or pets.
- Qatar has a diverse range of flora and fauna. The Purple Island located 40km from Doha in Al Khor is a mangrove forest that has a range of fish, shellfish as well as birds, including pink flamingoes.
- Every winter, traditional camel races are held in Al Shahaniya, which are not to be missed.
- Souq Waqif is one of Qatar's most vibrant social hotspots. It is a traditional cultural bazaar, which houses a variety of shops and has a range of restaurants serving a variety of cuisines.
- Some of the best beaches include Fuwairit Beach, Dukhan Beach, Simaisma Beach and Sealine Beach in Mesaieed where camping and dune bashing is a popular sport. Dune buggies are also available for rent there.
- Doha Bus, a hop-on, hop-off bus takes people sight-seeing around some of the interesting tourist landmarks in Qatar.
- The Pearl Qatar is a luxury development built on an artificial island shaped like a string of pearls. It was built on top of an old pearl diving site and is a great place for people to dine, socialise and shop for luxury apparel or products.
- World-renowned architect I. M. Pei designed the Museum of Islamic Art (MIA) in Doha, with its magnificent geometric design, which is a blend of both Islamic and modern architectural styles.
- Karak tea is one of the most popular beverages among local and expatriate residents alike in Qatar. The best spots for Karak are Tea Time and Chapati & Karak (in Katara Cultural Village).
- Doha Film Institute screens a number of independent as well as popular films regularly. Jazz lovers can check out The Club St. Regis Doha or at Oryx Rotana's Jazz Club. The Qatar Philharmonic Orchestra performs regularly in Katara's Opera House as well as open-air concerts at the Museum of Islamic Art Park on select weekends.
- If you are new to Doha, finding an online community is the best way to get involved in activities of interest to you. Apart from Facebook pages, other popular forums include Qatar Living, I Love Qatar and Doha Tweetups.



# Final note

## References/Sources

Ministry of Education  
[sec.gov.qa](http://sec.gov.qa)

Ministry of Culture Arts & Heritage  
[moc.gov.qa](http://moc.gov.qa)

Ministry of Interior  
[moi.gov.qa](http://moi.gov.qa)

Kharaama ( Water & Electricity Department )  
[km.com.qa](http://km.com.qa)

Hukoomi  
[hukoomi.qa](http://hukoomi.qa)

Qatar Tourism Authority  
[visitqatar.qa](http://visitqatar.qa)

## Others

- Qatar Living
- Marhaba Qatar
- Qatar Online Directory
- Hamad Medical Hospital
- Oreedoo Telecom
- Life in Qatar
- The Expat Woman

