

ASIA · DESERT · ARCHITECTURE · CULTURE · CITY BREAKS

Qatar

A small desert peninsula, Qatar has more to see than its size suggests: I.M. Pei's Museum of Islamic Art, Jean Nouvel's desert-rose National Museum, the lamplit lanes of Souq Waqif and dunes rolling down to the Inland Sea. It works best as a winter stopover of two to four days, when evenings on the corniche are warm rather than stifling.

 Before you go, read the UK government's travel advice for Qatar and entry requirements (visas, passport validity). Last updated by FCDO 19 August 2026.

 CAPITAL Doha	 CURRENCY Qatari riyal (QAR) £1 ≈ QAR 4.86	 LANGUAGE Arabic, English	 BEST TIME Nov–Mar
 DAILY BUDGET £60–£320 £££ Expensive	 PLUGS Type D, G 240V · UK plugs fit	 FLIGHT FROM LONDON 6h 50m direct ~£400–£800 return	 TIME ZONE UTC+3 standard time

Qatar is a small, flat peninsula jutting into the Gulf, and almost everything happens in and around Doha, whose metropolitan area holds most of the population and whose skyline has risen within a generation on natural gas wealth. A first visit is shaped like a city break: museums and the corniche, the restored souq, the Pearl and Lusail's new waterfront, then a day trip south into the dunes or north to the mangroves and the ruins of Al Zubarah. Preparations for the 2022 FIFA World Cup left a new metro and whole new districts.

Qatar is expensive by regional standards, but the metro is cheap and taxis reasonable. Summer, from June to September, is fiercely hot and humid, so outdoor life shifts to air-conditioned malls and late evenings; winter is mild and pleasant. The atmosphere is calm, orderly and conservative, with alcohol limited to licensed hotel venues. Many visitors arrive on a stopover and are surprised by how much art is on show, from the museums to public works by Richard Serra and Damien Hirst. It suits culture-focused short breaks more than beach holidays or nightlife.

Top 5 highlights

- 1

CULTURE

Museum of Islamic Art

I.M. Pei's geometric limestone museum stands on an artificial island off the corniche, holding some 1,400 years of Islamic art: ceramics, manuscripts, carpets and metalwork. The adjoining MIA Park has Richard Serra's sculpture '7' and skyline views.
- 2

CULTURE

Souq Waqif

A restored market quarter of mud-rendered lanes selling spices, textiles, perfume and falcons, with a specialist falcon hospital nearby. It comes alive after dark, when shisha cafés and Gulf restaurants fill every courtyard.

3

ARCHITECTURE

National Museum of Qatar

Jean Nouvel's building of interlocking discs, inspired by the desert rose crystal, wraps around the restored palace of Sheikh Abdullah bin Jassim Al Thani. Immersive galleries trace Qatar's story from geology and pearling to oil and gas.

4

NATURE

Khor Al Adaid

The Inland Sea in Qatar's far south-east, where high dunes run down to a tidal inlet facing Saudi Arabia. It can only be reached by 4x4 across the sand, so go on an organised trip with an experienced desert driver.

5

HISTORY

Al Zubarah

Qatar's UNESCO-listed ghost town on the north-west coast, a pearling and trading port abandoned in the early 20th century. Excavations reveal its streets and houses, and a restored 1938 fort nearby houses a small exhibition.

Biggest cities

LARGEST CITY

Doha

≈ 1.2 million people

The capital holds nearly all of Qatar's sights, including the Museum of Islamic Art, the National Museum, Souq Waqif and a long corniche, linked by a fast metro that also serves the airport.

2ND LARGEST CITY

Al Rayyan

≈ 830,000 people

A sprawling municipality merging into western Doha, home to Education City, the Aspire Zone and several World Cup stadiums; visit for specific sights rather than to wander.

3RD LARGEST CITY

Al Wakrah

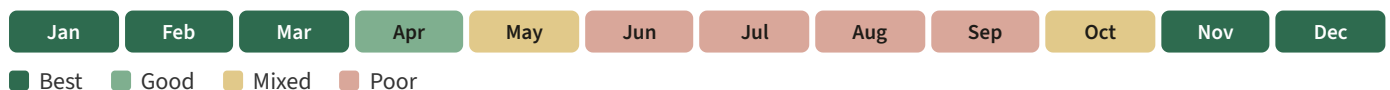
≈ 265,000 people

A fast-growing coastal town just south of Doha with a restored old souq, a calm public beach and seafood restaurants near the Zaha Hadid-designed Al Janoub Stadium; an easy half-day trip.

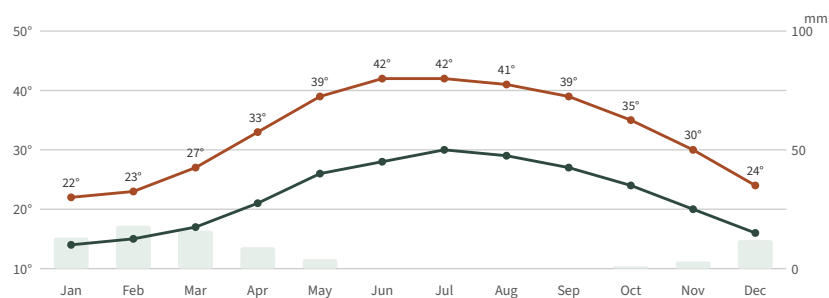
Al Rayyan and Al Wakrah are municipalities that run into Doha's urban sprawl; populations are rounded municipality figures from the 2020 census.

When to go to Qatar

Best time: **Nov–Mar.**

**Average climate in Doha**

— High °C — Low °C — Rain (mm)



Festivals & events

Feb–Mar	Ramadan The holy month changes the country's rhythm: quiet days, then lively nights of iftar feasts and late-opening souqs. Garangao, a children's celebration with sweets and songs, falls mid-month.
Nov–Dec	Qatar Grand Prix A Formula 1 night race at Lusail International Circuit near the end of the season, drawing big crowds; book hotels early if you plan to visit that weekend.
Dec	Qatar National Day On 18 December the corniche hosts parades, air displays and fireworks, with heritage events at the Darb Al Saai site in the days beforehand; expect road closures and crowds.

How much does Qatar cost?

SHOESTRING £60 per person / day ≈ QAR 292 hostels, street food, buses	MID-RANGE £140 per person / day ≈ QAR 681 3-star hotels, restaurants, some taxis	COMFORTABLE £320 per person / day ≈ QAR 1,557 4-star+, guided trips, private transfers
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Estimates per person per day, excluding flights. Prices vary by season and city.

Food to try

Machboos The national dish: rice cooked with loomi (dried lime), baharat spices and tomato, topped with chicken, lamb or fish.	Harees Wheat and meat slow-cooked and beaten into a smooth, savoury porridge finished with ghee, especially popular during Ramadan and Eid.	Luqaimat Crisp fried dough balls drizzled with date syrup and sesame seeds, sold hot from Souq Waqif stalls and served at every celebration.
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Getting around

The Doha Metro's Red, Green and Gold lines are fast, cheap and spotless, linking the airport, West Bay, Msheireb, Souq Waqif, Education City and Lusail. Uber, Careem and Karwa taxis fill the gaps at reasonable prices. Hire a car or join a tour for Al Zubarah and the north; trips to Khor Al Adaid need a 4x4 and an experienced desert driver. In summer, walking any distance is impractical.

Practical information

PLUGS & VOLTAGE  D G 240V — UK plugs fit	EMERGENCY NUMBERS Telephone: 999 (ambulance, fire, police) Source: FCDO “Getting help”
DIALLING CODE +974	TIME ZONE UTC+3 (standard time)

TAP WATER

Generally safe to drink

DRIVING

On the right

TIPPING

Service charges are often included in hotel restaurants; elsewhere around 10% is appreciated. Round up taxi fares and tip desert-safari drivers.

ETIQUETTE

Dress modestly in public, covering shoulders and knees, especially in malls, museums and souqs. Avoid public displays of affection, and don't eat, drink or smoke in public during daylight hours in Ramadan.

MAIN AIRPORTS

Hamad International Airport (DOH), Doha

Visas & entry for Qatar

Shown for a British passport.

Visa on arrival

You can get a tourist visa on arrival if you're travelling on a full British Citizen passport.

You must still get a visa in advance if:

From the UK government's FCDO entry requirements for British passport holders — read the full page for passport validity, permits and exceptions.

Health & vaccinations



See a travel health nurse, GP or travel clinic **6–8 weeks before you go**. Make sure routine UK vaccinations (such as MMR and diphtheria-tetanus-polio) are up to date.

RECOMMENDED FOR MOST TRAVELLERS

Tetanus

SOMETIMES ADVISED — DEPENDS ON YOUR TRIP, ACTIVITIES AND HEALTH

Hepatitis B

Measles

Rabies

Tuberculosis

Typhoid

YELLOW FEVER CERTIFICATE

A yellow fever certificate is only required if you arrive from (or transit through) a country with yellow fever risk — not if you fly direct from the UK.

MALARIA

No malaria risk

Source: TravelHealthPro (National Travel Health Network and Centre), checked 21 October 2026. This is a summary, not medical advice.

Public holidays in Qatar

The next 12 months. Banks, offices and some sights may close, and transport and hotels get busy around these dates.

Fri 18 Dec 2026

Qatar National Day

Tue 9 Feb 2027

National Sports Day

Tue 9 Mar 2027	Eid al-Fitr (date may shift)
Wed 10 Mar 2027	Eid al-Fitr (date may shift)
Thu 11 Mar 2027	Eid al-Fitr (date may shift)
Sun 16 May 2027	Eid al-Adha (date may shift)
Mon 17 May 2027	Eid al-Adha (date may shift)
Tue 18 May 2027	Eid al-Adha (date may shift)

National holidays only. Dates based on lunar calendars can move by a day or two depending on official announcements.

Useful phrases in Arabic

ENGLISH	ARABIC	SAY IT
Hello	مرحباً	MAR-ha-ba
Thank you	شكراً	SHUK-ran
Please	من فضلك	min FAD-lak
Excuse me	لو سمحت	law sa-MAHT
How much is this?	بكم هذا؟	bi-KAM HAA-tha

Know before you go

- Hamad International Airport is on the metro Red Line, so a long layover can be enough for the Museum of Islamic Art or an evening in Souq Waqif.
- Alcohol is sold only in licensed hotel bars and restaurants and is expensive; being drunk in public is an offence, so plan nights out around your hotel.
- From May to September, keep outdoor sightseeing to early morning or after sunset, carry water, and use the air-conditioned metro rather than walking between sights.

Visa, health and safety rules change. Before you book or travel, check the FCDO travel advice (gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice) and TravelHealthPro (travelhealthpro.org.uk). Costs are estimates. © 2026 Pick My Trip.