



**Fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the
Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna & Flora
Doha (Qatar) 13 – 25 March 2010,**

Information about Qatar

Location

Qatar is a peninsula located halfway down the west coast of the Arabian Gulf. Its territory comprises a number of islands including Halul, Sheraouh, Al-Ashat and others.

Topographic features

The terrain is flat and rocky with some low-rising limestone outcrops in Dukhan area in the west and Jabal Fiwairit in the north. It is characterized by a variety of geographical phenomena including many coves, inlets, depressions and surface rainwater-draining basins known as riyadh (the gardens), which are found mainly in the north and central part of the peninsula. These areas have the most fertile soil and are rich in vegetation.

Land area

The total land area of Qatar is approximately 11,521km².

Population

The population of Qatar amounts to 1,500,000 inhabitants (according to the initial results of the second stage of the 2009 population census).

83 % of inhabitants reside in Doha and its main suburb Al-Rayyan.

Capital city

Doha

Official language

Arabic is the official language in Qatar, and English is widely spoken.

Religion

Islam is the official religion of the country, and the Shariah (Islamic law) is a main source of its legislation.

Climate

The climate is characterized by a mild winter and a hot summer. Rainfall in the winter is slight, averaging some 80 millimetres a year. Temperatures range from 7° degrees centigrade in January to around 45° degrees at the height of summer. The weather is generally pleasant during the period from October until May.

Temperatures for March: average of 15°C minimum and 35°C maximum.

Major towns

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

Currency

The official currency is the Qatari Riyal (QR), which is divided into 100 dirhams. The exchange parity has been set at the fixed rate of USD 1 = QR 3.65.

National day

The 18th of December in commemoration of Sheikh Jasim bin Mohammad Al-Thani, the founder of the State of Qatar.

27 June

On the 27th of June His Highness Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al-Thani assumed the rule of the State of Qatar supported by the ruling family and the Qatari people.

Public holidays

National Day: 18 December.

Eid Al-Fitr Holiday: Starts from the 28th of Ramadan until the 4th of Shawwal.

Eid Al-Adha Holiday: starts from the 9th of Zilhijjah until the 13th of Zilhijjah.

National flag

The national flag is maroon with a broad vertical white stripe at the pole, the two colours being separated with a nine-point serrated line.

Meaning of the flag

- A. The white reflects the internationally recognized symbol of peace.
- B. The maroon symbolizes the bloodshed during the several wars Qatar underwent, particularly in the second half of the 19th century.
- C. The nine-point serrated line indicates that Qatar is the ninth member of the "reconciled Emirates" of the Arabian Gulf in the wake of concluding the Qatari-British treaty in 1916. This information on design and colour of Qatar flag was mentioned in the Archives of the British Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1931.

Work hours

Government offices: 7 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Private establishments: 8 a.m. to noon, and 4 p.m. to 8 p.m.

Friday and Saturday are the weekend.

Local time

Greenwich Mean Time + 3 hours (GMT +3).

Electrical current

240 Volts + 6 % with frequency 50 hertz.

Culture

The people of Qatar are friendly and make visitors feel very welcome. Arabic is the official language, although English is widely used. Qatar is an Islamic state, which guides not only the religious beliefs of Qataris but also plays a large part in their daily lives. Beautiful mosques are located throughout the country for daily prayers, and Qataris are guided by the Muslim teachings and values. Primarily a Bedouin culture, Qatar's traditions are based on poetry and song, while amazing art is created through weaving. Using tools made from both wood and gazelle horn, weavers work with sheep, goat, and camel wool to create beautiful rugs, tents and cushions.

Dining

While Arabian cuisine is based on the traditional foods of the nomadic tribes – who ate what they could carry – Qatari cuisine is based on the traditional foods of just about anywhere and everywhere! In keeping with its historic status as an international entrepôt, Qatar takes an international approach to eating out. Chinese, Indian, Japanese and Thai flavours mingle with those of Italy, France, the Mediterranean, Mexico and beyond. However, no visitor should miss the chance to sample local specialties. Supremely fresh fish and seafood from the Arabian Gulf is an obvious choice, with lobster, crab, shrimp, tuna, kingfish and red snapper topping the list of favourites. Meat dishes tend to be based on lamb – the nomadic tribes people would be accompanied by flocks of sheep – slow-cooked and served with a variety of side dishes.

Transportation

Moving around Qatar is quite easy and there are several options available to visitors. There are two types of taxis. The first type is the normal taxi. The tariff at flag fall is calculated as QR 4. The running rate per km inside Doha City during the day is calculated as QR 1.20. However, the running rate per km at night inside and outside Doha City is calculated as QR 1.80. The running rate per km outside Doha City during the day is calculated as QR 1.80.

The second type is the airport taxi (limousine). The tariff at flag fall is calculated as QR 18. The running rate per km inside Doha City during the day is calculated as QR 1.20. However, the running rate per km outside Doha City at night would be calculated as QR 1.80.

For taxi bookings & reservations, please contact telephone: 458 88 88

Do's & don'ts

Qatar is an Islamic nation, built on a history steeped in tradition and rich in values, culture and heritage. Family and prayer are the foundations of modern society and the teachings of Islam are reflected in every aspect of daily life.

The Qatari people are renowned for their national pride, boundless hospitality and seemingly limitless generosity. They are courteous, respectful people who place much faith in family values and have impeccable taste, manners and etiquette. As a resident or visitor to Qatar it is only fitting that one should observe local laws and customs as well as behave in a manner that is respectful toward the local Qatari people.

Always DO Dress modestly when in Qatar. A woman's shoulders should always be covered in public.

DON'T Wear mini-shorts, mini-skirts, strappy tops and see-through clothing unless you are at the beach or swimming pool. Men's clothing should be smart-casual. Tattoos should be covered up and piercings (other than earrings) are not acceptable. During the Holy month of Ramadan it is considered extremely offensive to dress inappropriately.

Courtesy is crucial, so

DO Be polite when conversing with a Qatari person. Formalities such as 'Good morning' are expected and exchanging handshakes with someone of the same sex is customary.

DON'T Be offended if your handshake is refused as members of the opposite sex are prohibited from touching in public. It may feel uncomfortable but

DON'T Pull your hand away if a Qatari person keeps holding on to yours - it is merely a sign of friendship and should be reciprocated, along with a kiss on both cheeks if offered. Qataris tend to stand very close to you while talking but ...

DON'T Back away, even if it makes you feel uncomfortable, as doing so would be considered rude. Public displays of affection are forbidden and touching a member of the opposite sex is considered to be in poor taste, whether you are a Muslim or not.

DON'T Approach a female for information or directions if you are a man and

DON'T Take photographs of sensitive sites such as military bases, airports and seaports.

DO Ask for permission before photographing a Qatari, especially if that person is elderly, female or is in the police or military.

DON'T Sit with the soles of your shoes or feet pointing at a Qatari and

DON'T Eat with your left hand - use of the left hand is associated with personal hygiene! Remember that pork products and pornography are banned in Qatar and the use and distribution of alcohol is strictly regulated. It is illegal to be drunk in public and

DON'T Drive while under the influence of alcohol.

Useful telephone numbers:

Police, fire and ambulance	999
Telephone directory	180
International calls	150
Internet service	111
Flight inquiries	462 29 99
Doha airport	465 66 66
Doha seaport	446 46 60
General post office	446 60 00
GSM telephone services	432 53 33

Import regulations by Qatar Customs

Import:

- Tobacco: reasonable amount
- Perfume: for personal use

Import highly restricted:

- Drugs
- Weapons
- Pork and pork products
- Importing of alcoholic beverages are highly restricted
- Intellectual property
- Explosives
- Vaccines, viruses

For further information please visit: <http://www.qatarembassy.net/>