



Qatar

قطر

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Best for Culture

- ➔ Museum of Islamic Art (p225)
- ➔ Souq Waqif (p225)
- ➔ Falcon Souq (p226)
- ➔ Qatar National Museum (p229)

Best Places to Stay

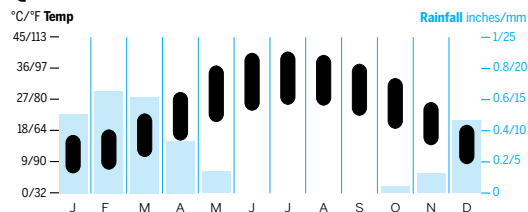
- ➔ Arumaila Boutique Hotel (p232)
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Why Go?

Just over a decade ago, we labelled Qatar one of the most boring places on Earth. Now it's fast becoming one of the most exciting. Doha is a world-class city in the making, with the peerless Museum of Islamic Art, perhaps the finest traditional souq in the Gulf region, and burgeoning arts and culinary scenes. Qatar is the kind of place where you can learn about the ancient pursuit of falconry or watch camels ridden by remote-controlled robot jockeys race across the desert, admire traditional dhows bobbing on the water alongside one of the world's most spectacular modern skylines, or sample Doha's portfolio of sophisticated restaurants and then watch the sun set over sand dunes that seem to spring from an Arabian fairy tale. Put simply, Qatar is racing headlong into the future without losing sight of its past – and it's one pretty exciting ride.

When to Go

Qatar



Oct–Mar Enjoy a break from the intense heat and humidity of summer.

Mar & Apr Cheer on the favourite at the Emir's GCC Camel Race – camel racing at its best.

May–Sep Extreme daytime temperatures – avoid this time if you can.

Daily Costs

Qatar is a relatively expensive destination. With the few budget hotels being swept away in the name of development, accommodation costing less than US\$100 per night is hard to find. Factoring in cheap options (around US\$10) for eating and the cost of a sight or an activity, a minimum daily cost with transport comes to around US\$150. This rises to US\$250 if you're staying in midrange hotels; for a top-end hotel with car hire, US\$400 is nearer the mark.

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Qatar Stopover

Spend a morning absorbing the best of Doha in a promenade along the **corniche**, watching the city's stellar skyline dance in the heat. Use the afternoon in cooler contemplation at the **Museum of Islamic Art**, Doha's priceless treasure house. Seek out gems of a different kind among the silks and spices for sale in **Souq Waqif**, and admire the feathered plumage on display in the neighbouring **Falcon Souq**. Complete the evening in the company of Qataris at one of the souq's teeming restaurants.

Three Days

Recharge on day two by the beach at **Katara**, where there are also fine restaurants and art galleries to fill your day, before a sunset **dhow trip**. On day three hire a car and tour the peninsula, stopping off at **Al Khor** for lunch at Al Sultan Beach Resort. Head north to explore the ancient **rock carvings** at Jebel Jassassiyeh and end the day at far-flung **Al Zubara**, visiting its fort.

For Expats

Camp out under the escarpment at **Bir Zekreet** and search for a pearl on a shore full of washed-up oysters. Cast an eye over the historic interior at **Umm Salal Mohammed** and neighbouring Umm Salal Ali, or enjoy some R&R and water sports at **Sealine Beach Resort**. For something more adventurous, stay overnight at the enchanting inland sea of **Khor Al Adaid**, picnic in the dunes and sleep on a magic carpet of sand.

AT A GLANCE

- ➔ **Currency** Qatari riyal (QR)
- ➔ **Mobile phones** SIM cards widely available
- ➔ **Money** ATMs widespread; credit cards widely accepted
- ➔ **Visas** Available on arrival for many nationalities

Fast Facts

- ➔ **Capital** Doha
- ➔ **Country code** 974
- ➔ **Language** Arabic (English widely spoken)
- ➔ **Population** 2.195 million

Exchange Rates

For current exchange rates see www.xe.com.

Australia	A\$1	QR2.65
Bahrain	BD1	QR9.72
Euro zone	€1	QR4.13
Japan	¥100	QR3.05
Kuwait	KD1	QR12.09
Saudi Arabia	SR1	QR0.97
UAE	Dh1	QR0.99
UK	£1	QR5.64
USA	US\$1	QR3.64

Essential Food & Drink

- ➔ **Makbous** Rice and spices with chicken, lamb or fish in a rich sauce.
- ➔ **Grilled lobster** Local crayfish are a popular choice.
- ➔ **Khabees** Dates in a variety of sizes, colours and stages of ripeness.
- ➔ **Tap water** Safe to drink, although most people stick to bottled water.
- ➔ **Alcohol** Available only in top-end hotel restaurants and bars.
- ➔ **Coffee** Traditionally served pale and spiked with cardamom or dark, strong and with plenty of sugar.

Resources

- ➔ **Lonely Planet** (www.lonelyplanet.com/qatar) In-depth coverage of Qatar and the Thorn Tree forum.
- ➔ **Al Jazeera** (www.aljazeera.com) Arab-world, Qatar-based equivalent of the BBC.
- ➔ **Qatar Tourism Authority** (www.qatartourism.gov.qa) Official tourism website.