

QATAR

Qatar is an Arab emirate in the Middle East, occupying the small Qatar Peninsula on the northeasterly coast of the larger Arabian Peninsula. It is bordered by Saudi Arabia to the south; otherwise the Persian Gulf surrounds the state. An oil-rich nation, Qatar has the second highest GDP per capita in the world.

History

Recent discoveries on the edge of an Island in the West of Qatar indicate early human presence in pre-historic Qatar. Discovery of a 6th millennium BC site at Shagra, in the South-east of Qatar revealed the key role the sea (Gulf) played in the lives of Shagra's inhabitants.

After centuries-long domination by the Ottoman and British empires, Qatar became an independent state on September 3, 1971 (but national celebration day is December 18).

Geography

The Qatari peninsula juts 100 miles (161 km) north into the Persian Gulf from Saudi Arabia and is slightly smaller than the state of Massachusetts, USA. Much of the country consists of a low, barren plain, covered with sand. To the southeast lies the spectacular *Khor al Adaid* ("Inland Sea"), an area of rolling sand dunes surrounding an inlet of the Persian Gulf. There are mild winters and very hot, humid summers.

Population

Almost all Qataris profess Islam. Besides ethnic Arabs, much of the population migrated from various nations to work in the country's oil industry. Arabic serves as the official language. However, English as well as many other languages like Hindi, Pashto, Malayalam, Punjabi, Urdu, Sindhi, Balochi, Tamil, Telugu, Bengali, Tagalog, and Persian are widely spoken in Qatar.

Expatriates form the majority of Qatar's residents. The petrochemical industry has attracted people from all around the world. Most of the expatriates come from South Asia and from non-oil-rich Arab states

Climate

Qatar enjoys sunshine just about every day of the year. The average temperatures during the summer range from 38°C to 42°C during the day and 18°C at night, while winter temperatures are 34°C during the day and 10°C at night. Swimming in the Arabian Gulf or in the many hotel pools, water sports, desert and city tours, shopping

Currency: Qatari Rials (QAR)

Living as an Expat

Housing in Qatar

Virtually all expatriates working in Qatar rent their property, and many are on employment contracts that include free or heavily subsidized housing, furniture and utilities. Most of the expatriate accommodation in Doha is in compounds which include a range of facilities such as swimming pools, gyms, tennis courts and playgrounds. The majority of villas and houses have gardens and at least three bedrooms. It is also possible to find separate townhouses and apartments to rent. Properties are usually rented out via local real estate agencies. Doha is a small city, and although most expatriates prefer compound accommodation, virtually all areas are easily accessible to the city centre, schools and the airport.

There is currently a severe shortage of rental accommodation in Qatar, and spiraling rental prices. This is related to the booming of the economy, the clearance of old buildings and the increasing number of expatriate employees seeking accommodation here. Within the last two years, rental prices have at least tripled. There has also been an increase in the number of six-month contracts, giving landlords and agencies the ongoing option of raising rents even more. As a result, some expatriates have found it impossible to cover the cost of their family accommodation from their fixed housing allowance and have either left the country or sent their families home and started sharing accommodation.

Getting there and around

People in Qatar generally use private transport. Visitors can use taxis. They are cheap, available anytime, anywhere and are easy to spot with their orange and white colors. For a more luxurious way of travel call Doha Limousine. Doha Limousine provide a chauffeur-driven top-of-the-range car 24 hours a day.

A foreigner can rent a car (there's nowhere to rent motorcycles) with a driving license from home – but *only* within seven days of arriving in Qatar (although expats resident in other GCC countries can drive for up to three months). After that, a temporary driving license must be obtained, issued by the Traffic License Office.

More information

For more information on Global Relocation Consultants (GRC) expat relocation services and mobility management please visit our website: www.grconsultants.org