

RELOCATING TO QATAR

HELPFUL ADVICE
AND KEY INFORMATION



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Cover image: Al Zubarah Fort, Qatar.

1.0 Overview



Qatar

Population: 907,229

Area: 11,437 km²

Government: Constitutional monarchy

Established: 3rd September, 1971 (independence from UK)

Capital: Doha

2.0 Why move to Qatar?



2.0 Why move to Qatar?

The State of Qatar is a small peninsular that juts out into the Arabian Gulf. The landscape is largely flat and arid with sand dunes in the south where the border with Saudi Arabia lies.

Wealthy from oil and gas exports, the country offers a standard of living for its citizens comparable with the west. There are excellent facilities and a modern infrastructure with an efficient transport system locals and expat workers appreciate. While Arabic is the official language, English is widely spoken and Persian, Hindi, Nepali and Urdu are also common.

Expats will discover a country where traditional Islamic values exist alongside a modern, confident state where there is plenty of freedom, allowing westerners to enjoy a lifestyle with few limitations. The majority of expats will be based in the capital Doha – a modern, growing city with all the trappings of a modern western city. Outside the modern city, there are beautiful beaches and further south you'll find majestic sand dunes.

The month of Ramadan is a feature of life in the Middle East. During this month of fasting, eating, drinking and smoking are not permitted in public, from sunrise to sunset. This is strictly adhered to, and even as a non-Muslim it is unacceptable to partake in any of the above in view of anyone who is observing Ramadan. Of course, one of the big attractions of life in Qatar is the warmth of the climate. With year round sunshine and mild winters, expats enjoy a good outdoor lifestyle and a busy social life.

2.1 The Economy

For centuries, Qatar's economy was based largely on pearling and fishing. The discovery of oil in the 1940s transformed the country's economic future. Today, oil and huge offshore gas reserves ensure the country prospers, with a high standard of living for its citizens.

Economically, Qatar is now a top performer in the Middle East, with average annual real GDP growth of around 6.5% over the past five years. Per capita income levels, of around \$30,000, are also among the highest in the world. The good economic situation has generated high levels of investment and Qatar has a confidence that is tangible. With the current reliance on oil and natural gas revenue, diversification is high on the agenda for the future development of this emerging country.

Huge offshore natural gas reserves have added hugely to the wealth of the country and today Qatar looks forward to years of prosperity, development and growth.

3.0 Life in Qatar



3.0 Life in Qatar

Alcohol is available and Qatar does have bars, and they'll be found inside hotels or attached to a club. The main night for socialising is Thursday, the start of the weekend. Drivers be warned; there is a zero alcohol policy and offenders can expect a large fine, expulsion from the country and even a night in jail. Alcohol can be bought with a permit – up to a limit of 10% of your income. Crime is virtually non-existent in Doha and it is generally safe for visitors to travel around the country.

There are plenty of cinemas, especially in Doha, including a 14 screen complex showing both Arabic and Western movies. You can also find ice-rinks and ten pin bowling facilities. A lot of entertainment takes place in modern hotels, although traditional entertainment is also available – sitting in a cafe, enjoying a shisha pipe and sipping strong coffee.

When it comes to food - with such a range of people, there's a huge choice of cuisine. Eating out is cheaper than in many countries in the West - a vegetarian Indian can cost less than two dollars. Seafood is particularly good value. In general, eating out is inexpensive. There is wide range of restaurants including Western, Asian and Middle Eastern. If you like shopping, put you'll be spoilt for choice. There are traditional markets and souqs, and huge modern shopping malls.

There's plenty to keep you busy in Qatar. There's world class golf at the Doha Golf Club, water sports, sand boarding and dune bashing are popular. You might also want to sample the camel racing at Shahinaya.

3.1 Climate

Qatar has an arid desert climate with mild winters and very hot summers. The average temperature range is 20° to 35°C. In the summer months (May - October) it is particularly hot and humid, with daytime temperatures reaching over 40°C during July and August.

3.2 Potential earnings and savings

One of the great attractions of working in Qatar is that there is no personal taxation. The only way to truly appreciate the quality of your offer is to analyse your package by factoring in cost of living.

Specifically geared towards the Middle East, the table below illustrates how net earnings in the UK compare to gross earnings in Qatar.

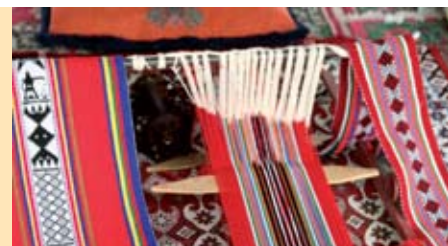
What you earn – and save every month:

| Annual UK Salary | UK Monthly Salary After Tax | Qatar Monthly Tax Free Salary | Monthly Saving |
|------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------|
| £30,000 | £1,825 | £2,500 | £675 |
| £36,000 | £2,196 | £3,000 | £804 |
| £48,000 | £2,788 | £4,000 | £1,212 |
| £50,000 | £2,886 | £4,166 | £1,280 |
| £60,000 | £3,378 | £5,000 | £1,622 |
| £72,000 | £3,968 | £6,000 | £2,032 |
| £100,000 | £5,345 | £8,333 | £2,988 |

Notes:

1. All calculations are based on monthly earnings.
2. The right hand column shows a % increase between the net and gross.

3.0 Life in Qatar



3.3 Money

The currency in Qatar is the Qatari Riyal (QR), which is divided into 100 Dirham. As of 21 February 2008, the relevant exchange rates were:

1 GBP = 7.0797 QR

1 EUR = 5.3573 QR

1 USD = 3.6375 QR

Banks

There are 14 commercial banks operating in Qatar, including six national banks. Setting up an account is easy, as is transferring money to the UK. You'll be given a cash point card to withdraw money from ATM machines. Credit cards are widely accepted.

3.4 Accommodation

For expats, accommodation is usually based on self-contained compounds. These comfortable places are ideal for families and come with swimming pools, tennis courts, satellite TV and security. Doha also has a choice of spacious villas and comfortable furnished apartments close to the city centre. Whatever you choose, all properties will have air conditioning.

Properties can be found through real estate agents, adverts in local newspapers, word of mouth and by visiting suitable areas. It is usual for your company to provide help and support in finding suitable accommodation.

Real Estate Agents

Knight Knox International (www.knightknox.com)

Mirage Real Estate Ltd (www.mirageproperty.com)

Direct Real Estate (www.directqatar.com)

3.5 Travel and transport

Qatar enjoys excellent transport facilities. In 2002, the government has launched the Taxi Company – Mowasalat but with a brand name of 'Karwa'. 100% owned, managed and operated by the government, over 2,000 well-maintained taxis make it easy and affordable to get around the country.

Most expats choose to rent a car during their stay. There are plenty of reputable car rental companies, including Hertz and Avis - and the road infrastructure in Doha is good. Expect to pay around 1500 Riyals a month.

You can use your national driving licence for one week, after which a Qatari licence must be obtained. Alternatively, an International licence can be used for 6 months.

The main airport is Doha International. After recent major development, the airport is fast becoming one of the world's largest with a state of the art infrastructure. This is the home of Qatar Airways, the national airline which flies to destinations in Europe, Asia and America.

3.0 Life in Qatar



3.6 Education

There is an excellent range of primary and secondary private schools in Qatar catering especially for the expat community. The majority are managed by and run for English-speaking Westerners and offer an American curriculum plus a UK or international syllabus. In general, standards at private schools are high, with small class sizes and modern facilities. Enrolment in private schools usually involves an interview with the parent and child and an examination to assess the correct class for the child.

3.7 Shopping

Qatar is a shopper's paradise with excellent malls, department stores and supermarkets which sell a huge variety of goods. There are plenty of smart, modern shops selling everything from DVD players to designer clothes, with the benefit of no sales tax.

3.8 Food and drink

Every type of food can be purchased in Qatar. There are plenty of fresh fruit, vegetable and fish markets all worth visiting. Qatar also has a large variety of restaurants serving European and Oriental cuisine. Most types of food and takeaway can be found in the major towns, from small independent to large international chains.

3.9 Communications

All mail in Qatar is addressed to post office boxes. Although a PO Box can be rented, most residents use their company address for private mail. There are a number of telephone networks available in Qatar, and international calls can be made easily from a landline using either a local service or one of the international internet call back companies. The international dial code for Qatar is +974.

3.10 Recreation

Qatar has a wealth of recreational activities. For the sports lover, there is fishing, horse riding, golf and a variety of water sports.

Desert driving is also popular; take a 4-wheel drive vehicle across the sand dunes and camp in the desert. Alternatively, relax around the pool at one of the several social clubs popular with expats.

In the evening, there is a choice of numerous restaurants serving Arabic, European, American and Asian cuisine throughout Qatar. Bars and nightclubs are numerous and often attached to hotels, but can stay open until 3.00 am. There are plenty of cinemas showing the latest movies and live bands from the UK, America and Asia.

4.0 Working in Qatar



4.1 Passports and visas

Your visa will be organised by your employer once you have secured a job offer from them. For the duration of your stay in the Middle East they act as your sponsor, and all documents such as driving licence, bank account, health cards etc are reliant on you being in possession of a Residence Visa, which will be organised by your employer.

4.2 Health regulations

There are no compulsory regulations for entry to Qatar.

4.3 The Qatar workplace

Smart, conservative clothing is expected, despite the soaring heat outside and the fiercely efficient air conditioning inside.

When greeting Arab women do not offer to shake their hand unless the woman extends hers first. The terms 'Sayed' (Mr) or 'Sayeda' (Mrs), followed by the first name, should be used in greeting, to ensure politeness. It is also very important for visitors never to sit with their feet pointing directly at someone else, as this causes offence.

Be careful when criticising a colleague or client, as causing someone to lose face is considered bad manners. Any criticism of colleagues should be kept for private discussions afterwards.

Friday is the main day of prayer, so meetings should not be scheduled for this day. Calls to Arab colleagues or clients should also be avoided on this day. Depending on the company, the other day of the weekend will be Thursday or Saturday.

4.4 Working hours

Office hours are usually from 8.30 or 9.00 am to 5.30 or 6.00 pm. In the month of Ramadan, the working day is reduced to six hours for Muslims, who fast during daylight hours.

4.5 Employment prospects

The market is booming in Qatar, and excellent opportunities exist for the right candidates who possess the required skills.

The government strongly encourages employers to use the local labour force where possible. Local graduates are being particularly encouraged to take up employment and employers are strongly urged to recruit Qatari graduates. UK graduates are likely to have particular difficulty securing a position unless they have substantial relevant work experience, or are already employed by a UK firm who transfers them to Qatar. Having made major investments in education and social welfare, Qatar aims to ultimately become as self sufficient as possible in terms of labour.

Taking into consideration the current popularity of tax-free destinations like Qatar, and the number of people wanting to relocate, finding a job is not a foregone conclusion or a quick process. In general, for a candidate to be employed from overseas they must have experience and skills that cannot be found locally. As a general rule, candidates will need to have at least four years' post qualification experience to be considered as viable.

4.0 Working in Qatar



4.5 Employment prospects *continued...*

Often, lower to middle level jobs are not advertised, instead recruiting and man power contracting agents are used to hire back in their native country.

So many of these jobs never appear in a public forum. Even if they did, the salary packages would be too low for most candidates who have previously lived and worked in the West to consider and survive on.

However, for those candidates with skills in demand the tax-free lifestyle and booming market can be a great career move. Generally the remuneration packages and the lifestyle that can be achieved are more favourable than equivalent roles in the UK, and the quality of life and experience of working in such a vibrant economy are experiences not to be missed for many.

5.0 General information



5.1 Useful links

www.justlanded.com/english/qatar

www.escapeartist.com

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