

# Riskline / Destination Report

This document was generated on 22 December 2023



## Overall risk level

<b>Low</b> Take normal safety precautions	<b>Moderate</b> Take normal safety precautions	<b>Medium</b> Exercise caution	<b>High</b> Reconsider travel	<b>Extreme</b> Defer non-essential travel
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The Overall Risk Level will be determined by the higher of the Security Risk Level and Covid-19 Risk Level.

## Security risk level

<b>Low</b> Take normal safety precautions	<b>Moderate</b> Take normal safety precautions	<b>Medium</b> Exercise caution	<b>High</b> Reconsider travel	<b>Extreme</b> Defer non-essential travel
Safe, with few security risks	Generally safe, with some predictable security risks	Not completely safe, but typically presents predictable security risks	Can be dangerous and may present unexpected security risks	Extremely dangerous and presents unpredictable security risks
Travel is possible with an expectation of routine disruptions and delays	Travel is possible with an expectation of routine disruptions and delays	Travel is possible, but there is a potential for disruptions	Travel is possible, but there is a potential for disruptions	Chaotic; travel impossible

## Covid-19 risk level

<b>Low</b> Take normal safety precautions	<b>Moderate</b> Take normal safety precautions	<b>Medium</b> Exercise caution	<b>High</b> Reconsider travel	<b>Extreme</b> Defer non-essential travel
Travellers should take normal precautions when travelling to <b>Low Risk</b> locations, which have limited or no restrictions on international travel and domestic activities.	Travellers should take normal precautions when travelling to <b>Moderate Risk</b> locations, which have few restrictions on international travel and limited or no restrictions on domestic activities.	Unvaccinated travellers should exercise caution when travelling to <b>Medium Risk</b> locations, and vaccinated travellers should take normal precautions. These locations may have some restrictions on international travel, but few restrictions on domestic activities.	Unvaccinated travellers should reconsider their need to travel to <b>High Risk</b> locations, and vaccinated travellers should exercise caution. These locations may have severely restricted international travel and partially restricted domestic activities.	Unvaccinated travellers should defer non-essential travel to <b>Extreme Risk</b> locations, and vaccinated travellers should reconsider their travel. These locations may have severely restricted international travel and domestic activities.

# Overview

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## Upcoming Events

12 January 2024 - 13 January 2024

- **Moderate risk:** Heightened security expected for football match in Doha's Lusail on 12 January 2024

Heightened security and disruptions are expected surrounding Lusail Stadium in Doha on 12 January 2024 for the opening match of the AFC Asian Cup between Qatar and Lebanon. The match is set to begin at 19:00 local time (16:00 GMT).

# Travel Advisories

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## ● **Moderate risk:** Increased risk of protests and attacks targeting Western interests in Middle East, North Africa and parts of Asia

Exercise caution for travel across parts of the Middle East, North Africa and Asia, including Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Türkiye, Lebanon, Syria, Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Iran, Indonesia, Jordan, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Yemen, Somalia, Malaysia and Pakistan, due to the risk of demonstrations and attacks against interests perceived to be aligned with Israel amid heightened tensions related to the Israel-Palestine conflict.

Following the Hamas attack into southern Israel on 7 October and Israel's subsequent strikes in the Gaza Strip, political and religious tensions have been heightened in Arab and Muslim countries. Groups or individuals may use the ongoing conflict between Israel and Hamas to justify attacks on individuals or businesses perceived to be aligned with Israel or the United States (US). Several branches of McDonald's and Starbucks have already been boycotted and attacked, and the risk of further attacks will be elevated for the duration of the conflict. Pro-Palestine demonstrations have also taken place frequently, including outside diplomatic representations of the United States (US) and other governments supporting Israel's operations in Gaza and the West Bank.

Since mid-October, McDonald's and Starbucks have been boycotted by consumers in several countries across the Middle East and Asia due to their perceived bias towards Israel, despite the fact that the vast majority of branches are operated by local franchise owners. While the boycott poses no direct threat to travellers, several branches have been attacked directly. On 13 December, a gunman opened fire at a Starbucks on **Turgut Özal Street** in the **Güzelyalı district** of **Çukurova, Adana province, Türkiye**, after vocalising support for Palestine; there were no injuries reported following the shooting. In Lebanon, several branches of McDonald's and Starbucks have been vandalised during pro-Palestine protests, including in the **Raouche** and **Ain al-Mraieh** areas of **Beirut** as well as in **Saida** and **Tyre**. The **American University of Beirut (AUB)** was also vandalised by pro-Palestine demonstrators to denounce US support for Israel.

Demonstrations have also been frequently held in major cities, notably outside

embassies and consulates of the US, Israel and France, including in **Tunis, Amman, Beirut, Rabat, Casablanca, Doha, Istanbul, Adana** and **Baghdad**. Pro-Palestine demonstrators have attempted to storm the **US Embassy** in **Awkar, Lebanon**, the **Israeli Embassy** in **Amman, Jordan**, and the **Incirlik Air Base (UAB/LTAG)**, which is used by the United States Air Force in **Turkiye's Adana province**, resulting in clashes with local security forces. Localised disruptions and road closures are likely during demonstrations, which will continue on a regular basis in the near-term. On 8 December, several rockets were fired towards the **US Embassy** in **Baghdad's Green Zone** amid an uptick in attacks on US targets by pro-Iranian militias in Iraq and Syria. Although there have been no reported similar attacks in the wider region to date, future attacks targeting US and other Western interests by proxy forces and militant groups cannot be ruled out for the duration of the conflict.

Anticipate heightened security and associated travel disruptions across major urban hubs on protest days in the near- to medium-term. Remain vigilant at all times and report suspicious behaviour and objects to local authorities. Remain indoors in areas where police operations are ongoing and comply with all instructions from authorities. Ensure all necessary travel documents are updated and ready to be displayed should authorities request them. Exercise general caution near all places of worship, foreign embassies and businesses which could be perceived as being pro-Israel.

# Summary

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## Overall ● Moderate Risk

Qatar is a **Moderate Risk** destination: take normal safety precautions.

## Security ● Moderate Risk

Moderate Risk locations are generally safe, with some predictable security risks. Travel is possible with an expectation of routine disruptions and delays.

## Covid ● Low Risk

Authorities have implemented the country's reopening strategy after previously imposing restrictions on businesses and gatherings. High vaccination rates in Qatar keep infections low. The wearing of facemasks may be required in health facilities.

## Political Instability ● Moderate Risk

The ruling Al-Thani family enjoys close ties with the United States (US), which maintains a major presence at the **Al-Udeid Air Base**, and despite being shunned by many of his neighbours for his foreign policy, the Emir, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, is popular within Qatar. The native population is almost entirely Sunni Muslim, so there are little or no sectarian tensions, but concerns remain over the treatment of migrant workers, who comprise over 88 percent of the total population of 2.7 million people.

## Conflict ● Moderate Risk

There are no sources of domestic conflict that can result in violence or separatism. Qatar's disputes with other countries are largely diplomatic, over its foreign policy and the role of Al Jazeera in the regional media scene. After a four-year breakdown of diplomatic relations with Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Egypt restored ties with Qatar in January 2021 in a goodwill gesture to the United States (US). Although their disagreements are unresolved, they are unlikely to escalate into conflict.

## Terrorism ● Moderate Risk

Due to the emir's known support for a wide variety of Islamist groups across the region, Qatar is not often subjected to threats by Islamist extremists. While attacks remain possible, they are more likely to target Western rather than national targets. While Qatar's police and military forces are professional and well-trained, they are relatively inexperienced given the country's history of stability.

## Unrest ● Low Risk

Protests are highly unlikely to take place across Qatar. As one of the wealthiest countries in the world, Qatari nationals are generally supportive of their government. Despite relying heavily on migrant workers, Qatar is unlikely to see meaningful labour action as well, as foreigners are not allowed to form unions and risk deportation for engaging in organised labour activities.

## Crime ● Low Risk

Violent crime is rare in Qatar. Petty theft is the most common type of crime, along with sexual harassment of women. Due to a recent rise in the cost of living, home invasions, car theft and credit card fraud have been on the rise but remain at a low level in comparison to most other countries. Police forces maintain a strong presence across the country and are professional and courteous.

## Natural and Environmental ● Moderate Risk

Natural disasters are rare across Qatar. Its main environmental hazards are sandstorms, which can reduce visibility for travel from February to September, and extreme heat waves from May to September. Emergency response is fast and reliable.

## Local Travel ● Moderate Risk

Roads are well-maintained and of high quality across Qatar but reckless driving is common. Public transport across **Doha** is widely available and air-conditioned; areas outside the capital are less covered, however. Air travel is safe and reliable. Sea travel is limited as the political situation in the region remains tense; vessels may be detained and searched.

## Health and Medical ● Moderate Risk

Medical care across Qatar is of an international standard, with high quality facilities and well-trained, English-speaking professional staff. Public health care is heavily subsidised. Some common medicines, including sleeping pills, are banned in Qatar, or require a prescription. High temperatures, particularly during the summer, make sunstroke and heat exhaustion a real risk. Sand and dust in the air can aggravate or cause respiratory problems.

## Political Overview : ● Moderate Risk

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On 25 June 2013, 66-year-old former Emir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani announced that he was stepping down from his position and handed power over to his son, Sheikh Tamim. While continuing his father's reformist agenda, Sheikh Tamim has signalled a shift from international affairs to domestic ones by dialling down Qatar's aggressive, interventionist foreign policy. Tensions between Qatar and its neighbours have existed for years, driven by Qatar's open support for Islamist movements in the region and Doha-based Al Jazeera Media Network's critical coverage of other governments. A breakdown of diplomatic relations between 2017 and 2021 resulted in a trade and travel embargo led by Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), whose leaders demanded that Al Jazeera be shut down and Qatar fully sign onto the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) agenda against Iran. The dispute was resolved following joint US-Kuwait mediation in 2021, with the restoration of diplomatic ties and ending of the trade and travel restrictions. While Qatar has reigned in its more adventurous international undertakings in recent years, the Al-Thani family continues to pursue their own foreign policy, maintaining strong ties with Turkey and Iran in spite of their neighbours' demands to sever these ties.

In 1995, Qatar abolished censorship and devolved a limited amount of power to a consultative assembly (*Majlis as-Shura*). Qatar's 2003 Constitution, approved by popular referendum, created a legislative body, for which two-thirds of members were elected and one-third appointed by the emir. Legislative elections were held in Qatar for the first time on 2 October 2021. 30 seats in the 45 seat legislature were chosen by eligible voters, while the emir appointed the remaining 15. Although voter turnout was 63.5 percent, many Qataris were reportedly barred from voting. The elections symbolised an important step towards democracy but also a move to quell criticism ahead of the 2022 FIFA World Cup. The emir retains preeminence as head of state and head of government and rights of assembly and association also remain limited, with restrictions on labour unions and opposition parties in place. Notwithstanding the slow pace of reform, previous steps towards democracy have been popular among the people of Qatar. An exceptionally well-funded welfare state, established to meet the requirements of social and economic progress, contributes to political stability.

Largely excluded from this system, however, are the 2.4 million guest workers, primarily South Asian and Hindu, living in the country. Migrant working conditions and the exploitative *kafala* system have long been a bone of contention between the



Qatari government and international organisations, especially in the lead-up to the 2022 FIFA World Cup. Further reforms, such as allowing labour unions and a path to citizenship, are unlikely to materialise.

In 2001, Sheikh Hamad offered the US a forward operating base at **Al-Udeid**, located 32km (20 miles) outside **Doha**. The presence of the US military helps to safeguard Qatar's vast oil and gas reserves as well. Türkiye also remains a key military partner of Qatar's. The US will maintain its strong support for the Al-Thani for the foreseeable future due to the important role the country plays in the US-led containment of Iran, including sometimes acting as a backchannel to the Islamic Republic due to the cordial ties between Doha and Tehran.

## Recent incidents

19 June 2023 - 20 June 2023

### ● **Low risk:** Embassies reopen as Qatar and UAE resume full diplomatic relations - Update

Sources from the Qatari foreign ministry announced that its embassy was reopened in United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Emirati sources indicated the opening of its embassy in Qatar, marking the full resumption of diplomatic relations between the two countries.

25 May 2023 - 26 May 2023

### ● **Moderate risk:** Qatar and Bahrain officials to resume direct flights from 25 May

Local sources indicate that effective 25 May, Qatar and Bahrain officials will reopen their airspace to respective aircraft, as part of the ongoing process of normalising ties over a diplomatic dispute initiated in 2017.

# Conflict : ● Moderate Risk

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**Border Conflicts:** After years of strained relations, Saudi Arabia and Qatar have demarcated their border and established a joint coordination council, co-chaired by the Saudi and Qatari crown princes, to oversee bilateral relations.

Relations between Qatar and fellow members of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) reached a new low when Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Bahrain withdrew their ambassadors from **Doha** in 2014 over the country's alleged support for the Muslim Brotherhood and other Islamist groups in the Middle East. Qatar had aligned itself with moderate Islamist movements, especially the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, in the aftermath of the 2011 Arab Spring in the hopes of extending its influence in the region. Saudi Arabia had previously withdrawn its ambassador after Al-Jazeera criticised the ruling House of Saud.

In 2017, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Egypt and the UAE spearheaded a trade and diplomatic blockade against Qatar, which included a ban on travel to and from the country and the closure of air, sea and land borders, over its support for the Muslim Brotherhood, the inflammatory rhetoric of Al Jazeera and the Al-Thani's support for Islamist groups involved in the Syrian Civil War. The blockade ended in January 2021, without Qatar having to formally agree to any of the blockading countries' demands. Qatari leaders have said that they will not change their politics or ties with Türkiye or Iran as part of the deal, suggesting the underlying cause of the conflict remains unresolved.

In spite of these diplomatic rows, Qatar and its neighbours in the Gulf still share many political and strategic interests, such as concern over Iranian military power and fear of labour and sectarian unrest. An escalation to actual conflict is highly unlikely.

**International Military Alliances:** Qatar has signed defence pacts with the US, the United Kingdom (UK), Türkiye and France, and plays an active role in the collective defence efforts of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), contributing military units to a small GCC rapid deployment force known as Peninsula Shield.

**International Forces on Territory:** Qatar provides a major headquarters and air operations centre, air base facilities, port facilities, and pre-positioning facilities for the US military's Central Command (CENTCOM) at **Al-Udeid Air Base** outside **Doha**. Despite increasing Qatar's attractiveness as a target for international jihadists, a US troop presence guarantees the small country's security in the unlikely event of a foreign military attack. In addition to the 10,000 US troops deployed at the air base,

between 3,000 and 5,000 Turkish troops are garrisoned at **Tariq Bin Ziad Camp** in **Doha** under the Qatar-Türkiye Combined Joint Force Command. Qatar maintains a modest military force with a personnel strength of about 16,500 personnel.

# Terrorism

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**International Terrorism:** Close ties to Salafist extremists embedded within Qatar's religious hierarchy and Interior Ministry moderate the risk of a high-profile attack by international terrorist operatives. Though authorities remain on alert for chatter indicating a developed in-country presence, the extension of an advanced al-Qaeda or Islamic State (IS) cell structure into Qatar is unlikely. Visitors are advised to monitor local and international media for communiqués issued that explicitly call for attacks in Qatar. Due to historically strong ties to Iran, Qatar is unlikely to be targeted by Iranian-backed infiltrators and saboteurs like other Gulf states have been in recent years. The risk of militant infiltration through the country's extensive network of guest workers is also considered low.

**Critical Energy Infrastructure:** Oil and gas facilities in **Mesaieed**, **Ras Laffan** and **Dukhan** are largely modern and have thus been secured to modern standards. Offshore facility protection has been named a government priority. The weakest element of the hydrocarbon sector is a built-in dependence on foreign personnel. Visitors to the installations servicing Qatar's oil industry are advised to exercise caution in areas adjoining the secured perimeter of oil terminals and refineries. In the capital, **Doha**, as well as the cities of **Mesaieed** and **Ras Laffan**, travellers are recommended to limit the time spent in the lobbies of buildings housing the corporate offices of private oil interests.

**Response Preparedness:** The Qatari government is thought to have adequate capacity to monitor and disrupt potential dissident and terrorist activity though this remains untested due to the country's peaceful history.

## There are no recent incidents

# Unrest : ● Low Risk

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**Strikes:** Qatari law nominally grants workers the right to strike, though restrictive conditions make the likelihood of industrial action remote. Expatriate workers who have staged strikes to seek redress and improvement in their work situation have often been detained and deported. Government employees, domestic servants and those in the public utility, health and security services are prohibited from striking.

**Protests and Demonstrations:** Criticism, dissent and freedom of assembly are regulated liberties in Qatar, and anti-government demonstrations are not tolerated. High levels of personal wealth help to moderate dissatisfaction. Rare political rallies may be permitted with respect to international developments, such as the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, but these are uncommon. The handful of labour demonstrations occurring in recent years have been small in number and quickly suppressed with the arrest of the participants.

## Recent incidents

17 October 2023 - 19 October 2023

### ● Moderate risk: Anti-US, pro-Palestine demonstrations underway in Doha

Local media indicated that anti-US and pro-Palestine demonstrations were underway outside the US embassy as well as around Souq Waqif in Doha, since late night hours local time on 17 October, in protest of US support for Israel and in light of a recent deadly alleged Israeli airstrike on a hospital in Gaza. There were no immediate reports of clashes or arrests.

# Crime : ● Low Risk

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**Petty Crime:** Petty crime, including pick-pocketing, bag-snatching, and mugging, is rare but may occur.

Beware of your surroundings, do not leave your belongings unattended and exercise general personal safety for travel. Only carry what is needed, do not flash expensive valuables or large sums of money, and keep cash, identification and mobile phones in front pockets, or in a zipped or concealed pocket or pouch rather than in a bag. Secure belongings when using public transport or when frequenting markets and other crowded public areas; secure bags diagonally across the body against the chest, keep bags within sight and away from the street. Refrain from using mobile phones or laptops in congested public places; avoid putting bags containing valuables on the ground. Avoid walking in poorly lit and isolated areas. Stay in groups. Reject rides or drinks from strangers and never leave drinks unattended. Exercise extreme caution when purchasing and consuming alcohol in public venues. Do not accept pamphlets in the street or shopping centres; these could be impregnated with potent and disorienting drugs, which permeate the skin. If you start to feel unwell, tell staff or close friends and do not leave the venue alone or with strangers. Shout to attract attention, if needed.

**Violent Crime:** Travellers are unlikely to experience violent crime of any sort in the country. Home invasions and car theft have recently been on the rise but remain at a low level in comparison to most other countries.

Commonsense measures are best kept to ensure against becoming the victim of a violent crime. Travellers are advised to remain vigilant at all times and exercise general personal safety for travel: avoid walking alone at night, do not venture down roads with poor lighting and few access points. Be careful when using taxis and public transport and plot route bypasses around rowdy crowds. Seek local advice for areas to avoid. If you are held-up by an armed robber do not become confrontational as any resistive behaviour may cause more violence by the attackers.

**Property Crime:** Residential break-ins have recently increased, particularly in urban centres. Alcohol used to be the prime target of thieves breaking into private residences, however, the increased cost of living in Qatar has driven thieves to shift focus to cash, jewellery, personal electronics and credit cards. However, these incidents remain sporadic and do not pose a significant risk to travellers.

Travellers are advised against leaving valuables in hotel rooms. Deposit important items in the safe. Be sure to lock hotel/house doors, even when you are present. Home invaders often conduct thorough investigations of their victims' routines and whereabouts prior to an attack. Avoid visible displays of wealth and check for signs of being followed when returning to one's place of residence. If you do happen to be burgled, remain cooperative as perpetrators are likely to be armed and any resistive behaviour may cause more violence by the attackers.

**Fraud and Scams:** Identity theft and ATM and credit card fraud are on the rise in the capital, but the number of incidents remains low enough not to pose a significant risk to travellers.

**ATM fraud:** Always refuse unsolicited assistance while at an ATM, and avoid ATMs other than at malls and banks. Keep a 24-hour emergency number for ATM cards on hand to prevent illegal withdrawals from the account if such incidences occur.

**Credit Card fraud:** Visitors should only use credit cards when an electronic transaction is possible and when the transaction can be completed directly in front of them. Never let a clerk, sales assistant or waiter take a card to another location for the transaction to be processed. If this cannot be avoided, visitors should insist upon going with the individual to the point of sale to witness the transaction. Keep an eye on the card at all times. Always ensure that you receive a receipt and check the amount to be correct.

**Identity Theft:** Avoid using free wireless access available in public areas and use a VPN to access the internet. Refrain from discussing your travel plans or personal information in the public or over the phone. Visitors are advised to use a paper shredder to dispose of sensitive documents, to avoid identity thieves rifling through garbage to find documents that can be used fraudulently.

**Kidnapping:** Kidnappings are not a particular concern in Qatar. Isolated instances may occur, but they are not considered to be representative of a wider trend targeting travellers or foreign nationals. In the event of a kidnapping, law enforcement's response is likely to be very good. The Qatari police maintain a strong presence across the country and are professional and courteous.

Travellers should remain aware of their surroundings and follow the latest advisories for their destination. Maintain communications and your itinerary with local contacts, authorities or embassy staff, especially in locations with a higher risk of kidnapping. Consider a local guide or security escort for the highest risk locations.

There are no recent incidents



# Law

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**Law:** Giving someone a cheque that will bounce or the non-payment of bills can result in an imprisonment, fine or deportation from Qatar. If you have unpaid loans, you may find yourself unable to cancel your residence permit or to leave the country.

**Morality Laws:** The judicial system in Qatar is based on Shari'a and prohibits sexual acts between same-sex partners, punishable with up to five years imprisonment. Enforcement of the law is sporadic and foreigners are often simply deported or given the option to leave. Any intimacy in public between men and women is illegal and thus inadvisable.

Incidents involving use of obscene language/gestures often result in arrest, overnight imprisonment and/or fines whether the incident occurs between private parties or involves public officials. Even minor expressions or road rage can attract significant penalties. Take steps to avoid offending or otherwise insulting others in public.

# Corruption

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**Corruption:** Visitors are unlikely to come in direct contact with corrupted officials. Bribery is illegal in Qatar and visitors are strongly advised to report solicitation by public officials and police to a higher authority. Residents are unlikely to come in contact with any form of corruption. It should be noted that the court system is slow, bureaucratic and reported to be biased in favour of Qataris and the government. The freedom to start, operate and close a business is restricted by Qatar's regulatory environment. The government has updated a number of commercial laws to encourage economic investment and development but bureaucracy and a lack of procurement transparency still challenge entrepreneurial activities.

# Security Services

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**Security Services:** Depending upon traffic density and other service calls, police response time in **Doha** can range from five to 20 minutes. However, response times can be longer during local religious holidays and on weekends. Police officers are generally professional, cooperative and courteous, particularly when assisting and administering at the scene of traffic accidents and infractions. The majority of the uniformed police forces in Qatar are third country nationals; from time to time this presents command, control and communication challenges for their Qatari national leadership. English language skills of first responders may be lacking. Local police enforce laws and arrest violators. Be cautious about reporting suspicious behaviour as police can treat suspects harshly. There are some reports that the police are reluctant to treat violence against women, particularly domestic violence, as a criminal matter. The Mubahathat (secret police), a branch of the Ministry of Interior, deals with sedition and espionage. The army's mission does not include internal security, although the army may be called upon in the event of serious civil disturbances. Nevertheless, a separate agency, the Mukhabarat (intelligence service), is under the armed forces jurisdiction. Its function is to intercept and arrest terrorists and to closely monitor political dissidents. The police routinely monitor the communications of suspects extra-judicially. Although warrants are commonly required for searches, these regulations do not apply in cases involving national security. The security forces reportedly have applied severe force in investigating political and security-related cases. Qatar has a public security force of about 8,000 personnel, including a coast guard and maritime police. The Ministry of Interior is responsible for the 2,500-strong police force.

# Natural Risks : ● Moderate Risk

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Natural disasters are rare across Qatar. Its main environmental hazards are sandstorms, which can reduce visibility for travel from February to September, and extreme heat waves from May to September. Emergency response is fast and reliable.

## Heat Waves

A heat wave is characterised by temperatures that hover at 10 degrees or more above the average high for the region over a period of several weeks. Parallel weather systems may include temperature inversions and katabatic winds.

The summer months (May to September) are exceptionally hot, with temperatures climbing to highs of 49 degrees Celsius (120 degrees Fahrenheit) and 90 percent humidity in August. Cities and towns in surrounding areas effectively shut down for the afternoon and travelling on board public transportation with no air conditioning unit can be particularly unpleasant.

In hot weather, you will need to increase fluid intake (non-alcoholic), regardless of activity level. Stay indoors in an air-conditioned room. This is the primary means of protection against heat-related illness and possibly death. If a home is not air-conditioned, identify public facilities that are. Wear lightweight, light-coloured, loose-fitting clothing. If you must be out in the heat, limit outdoor activity to early morning and late evening hours. Those at greatest risk of suffering heat-related illness include infants, young children and adults aged 65 or older.

## Dust/Sand Storms

Dust storms occur when a gust front or other strong wind system blows loose sand and dirt from a dry surface. As such, dust storms normally only occur in arid and semi-arid regions.

Dust and sand storms are common in the spring and summer months (February to September), often forming spontaneously with the passage of a front. High winds lift dirt particles or, in the case of sandstorms, sand, into the air, unleashing a turbulent,

suffocating cloud of particulates and reducing visibility to zero in a matter of seconds.

Because meteorologists can commonly predict the likely onset of a storm, the most effective way to mitigate physical risk is to monitor local weather updates and consider deferring travel in the event of a storm alert. If you see a dust storm from some distance and you are in a vehicle you may be able to outrun or detour around it. Some dust storms can travel at more than 120 kph (75 mph), but they frequently travel much slower. Those in transit when a storm catches up to them are advised to roll up windows and turn off vents before pulling off the road, setting the parking brake and turning on headlights, brake lights and turn signals. If stuck outside, seek out a large rock or other landform offering at least partial protection. Avoid breaking rank with your group to mitigate the risk of becoming lost in zero visibility conditions. Carry a mask designed to filter small particulates and a pair of airtight goggles to protect your eyes. As an alternative, wrap a wet bandana or strip of cloth around your nose and mouth. Store loose fitting clothing for use as a protective layer against the effects of sandblasting. In addition, air travel may also likely be disrupted during sand storms.

## Flooding

A flood is an overflow of water that submerges land that is usually dry. It is normally triggered by an extended period of heavy rainfall and can be exacerbated by poor drainage systems in the affected area.

Low-lying areas of **Doha**, including traffic tunnels, are susceptible to flooding from sudden downpours.

If instructed of the possibility that flash-flooding may affect the area you are in, monitor local updates and move immediately to higher ground away from rivers, streams, creeks and storm drains. Though flash-flooding is commonly attributable to excess upstream precipitation, be aware that flooding can occur without typical warning signs of rain clouds or heavy rain. This is especially true near streams, drainage channels, canyons and other areas known to flood suddenly. If you happen across a flooded road in your car, turn around and drive in the opposite direction. When trapped on a flooded road, vacate your vehicle immediately and climb to higher ground.

## Recent incidents

26 October 2023 - 27 October 2023

### ● **Moderate risk:** Flooding causes traffic disruptions in Doha

Transport officials advised motorists to anticipate delays and closures due to flooding on multiple streets in Doha, including Salwa Road, Sabah Al-Ahmad Corridor, February 22 Road, Pearl Interchange Tunnel, Onaiza Street and Lusail Expressway, as of evening hours local time.

# Health and Medical: ● Moderate Risk

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## Overview

Medical care across Qatar is of an international standard, with high quality facilities and well-trained, English-speaking professional staff. Public health care is heavily subsidised. Some common medicines, including sleeping pills, are banned in Qatar, or require a prescription. High temperatures, particularly during the summer, make sunstroke and heat exhaustion a real risk. Sand and dust in the air can aggravate or cause respiratory problems.

## Before you travel

Consult your doctor or a healthcare provider who specialises in travel medicine at least six weeks before your departure. If you have a medical condition, you should also share your travel plans with your doctor.

## Outbreaks and Other Diseases

### Malaria

There is no risk of malaria transmission.

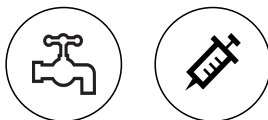
### Yellow Fever

There is no risk of Yellow Fever infection.

## Vaccinations, Medicines and Documentation

**Note:** Requirements and recommendations for vaccines and other medicines as well as Yellow Fever vaccine are based on guidelines from the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Yellow Book 2024. All other entry requirements are based on Riskline research.

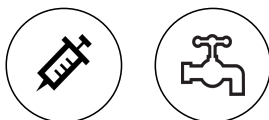
## Routine vaccines



Make sure you are up-to-date on all routine vaccines before every trip. Some of these vaccines include

- Chickenpox (Varicella)
- Diphtheria-Tetanus-Pertussis
- Flu (influenza)
- Measles-Mumps-Rubella (MMR)
- Polio
- Shingles

## COVID-19



All eligible travellers should be up to date with their COVID-19 vaccines.



## Hepatitis A



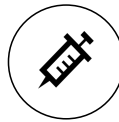
Recommended for unvaccinated travellers one year old or older going to Qatar.

Infants 6 to 11 months old should also be vaccinated against Hepatitis A. The dose does not count toward the routine 2-dose series.

Travellers allergic to a vaccine component or who are younger than 6 months should receive a single dose of immune globulin, which provides effective protection for up to 2 months depending on dosage given.

Unvaccinated travellers who are over 40 years old, immunocompromised, or have chronic medical conditions planning to depart to a risk area in less than 2 weeks should get the initial dose of vaccine and at the same appointment receive immune globulin.

## Hepatitis B



Recommended for unvaccinated travellers younger than 60 years old traveling to Qatar.

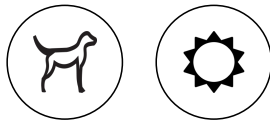
Unvaccinated travellers 60 years and older may get vaccinated before traveling to Qatar.

## Measles



Infants 6 to 11 months old traveling internationally should get 1 dose of measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) vaccine before travel. This dose does not count as part of the routine childhood vaccination series.

## Rabies



Rabid dogs are commonly found in Qatar. However, if you are bitten or scratched by a dog or other mammal while in Qatar, rabies treatment is often available.

Consider rabies vaccination before your trip if your activities mean you will be around dogs or wildlife.

Travellers more likely to encounter rabid animals include

- Campers, adventure travellers, or cave explorers (spelunkers)
- Veterinarians, animal handlers, field biologists, or laboratory workers handling animal specimens
- Visitors to rural areas

Since children are more likely to be bitten or scratched by a dog or other animals, consider rabies vaccination for children traveling to Qatar.

## Typhoid



Recommended for most travellers, especially those staying with friends or relatives or visiting smaller cities or rural areas.

## Required documentation

### Yellow Fever entry requirement (Source: USA CDC):

Required for travellers nine months and older arriving from countries with risk for YF virus transmission.

### Other entry requirements:

International certificate of polio vaccination is required in accordance with the International Health Regulations (IHR, Annex 6) for all travellers arriving from polio-exporting countries.

### Health Insurance document

Officials require health insurance for incoming travellers. Insurance covering accidents and emergency-related conditions only is mandatory for all travellers requiring a visa to enter the country; GCC citizens are exempt.

**Note:** Documentation requirements are subject to change. Consult your destination embassy or consulate prior to departure for confirmation.

## While you are there

### Emergency Numbers

Medical	999	
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### Emergency services

Ambulances and other emergency services are readily available across urban and rural areas. Staff are well-trained and ambulances are well equipped. Response times are good.

### Evacuation

Medical evacuation is unlikely to be required.

### Routine care

Medical facilities are of an excellent standard, with well-stocked pharmacies and

modern equipment. Clinics and walk-in centres are easily accessible across both urban and rural areas. Doctors and other staff are highly trained and professional, and many speak English or French as well as Arabic.

## Medicine

Most essential and prescription medicines are available in pharmacies nationwide. Many medicines that would usually be available over the counter in other countries may require a prescription in Qatar, and some drugs – such as sleeping pills – are banned. Ensure that the medication you are carrying when you enter Qatar is legally allowed in the country.

## Payment

Residents can apply for a health card – provided by the Hamad Medical Corporation – at post offices or other registered health card offices; with a health card, residents receive a subsidised rate at public healthcare facilities. Private facilities may require proof of insurance or ability to pay prior to treatment.

## Ailments

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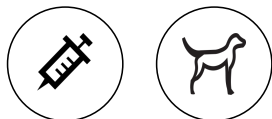
### Traveller's diarrhoea (TD)



*Traveller's diarrhoea (TD) is a catch-all term for a number of minor or moderate bacterial, viral and parasitic infections, generally transmitted through infected food or water. In the majority of cases antibiotics or anti-diarrhoeal medication is unnecessary; travellers experiencing TD should ensure that they remain hydrated and well rested until their symptoms dissipate. Most cases of TD last less than three days; if diarrhoea continues for longer periods, travellers should consider consulting a medical professional.*

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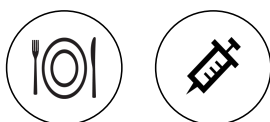
## Rabies



Rabies is present in animals in Qatar.

*Rabies is a serious viral infection, transmitted through close contact with saliva from infected animals (i.e. bites, scratches or licks on broken skin and mucous membranes). Travellers who suspect they may have come into contact with a rabies-infected animal should seek immediate emergency attention: post-exposure treatment has a high success rate if administered early. Late-stage rabies (when symptoms begin to occur) is untreatable and fatal.*

## Typhoid



Typhoid has been reported in Qatar.

*Typhoid is a highly contagious bacterial infection, transmitted by the ingestion of food and water contaminated with infected faeces. Symptoms include a high temperature, a rash made up of small red spots, headaches, stomach pain and diarrhoea; serious complications, including internal bleeding and becoming comatose, are possible. While a typhoid vaccine is available, it does not guarantee immunity.*

## Hepatitis (A, B, C, D and E)



Hepatitis poses a risk to travellers in Qatar.

*Hepatitis is inflammation of the liver. The three main variations (A, B and C) are caused by infections from parasites, bacteria or viruses, but are transmitted by different means.*

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## Leishmaniasis

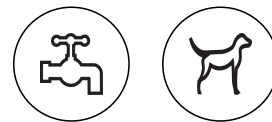


Although rare across the country, leishmaniasis has been reported infrequently in rural regions of Qatar.

*Leishmaniasis is a parasitic infection transmitted by the bite of sand flies, which are most active during early morning and late evening hours. Symptoms of cutaneous leishmaniasis include swollen glands and sores; symptoms of visceral leishmaniasis include fever, swelling of the liver or spleen and weight loss. Leishmaniasis can be treated with a course of Amphotericin B, an antifungal.*

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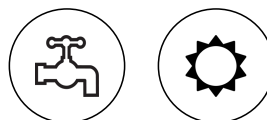
## Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS)



*Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) is a viral infection transmitted by close physical contact with an infected person or animal or via the coughing and sneezing of infected persons. Symptoms include breathing difficulties, coughing and fever and – in severe cases – pneumonia or kidney failure. There is no treatment for MERS, beyond supportive hospital care and bed rest.*

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## Chronic Respiratory Ailments



Dust is a major problem in Qatar, especially during the summer when desert sands and construction sites in **Doha** combine to produce a respiratory hazard for those with a history of related problems.

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## Recent incidents

21 July 2023 - 22 July 2023

● **Moderate risk:** Health officials issue measles alert for Doha-Sydney flight and parts of Sydney

Australian officials issued an alert on 21 July urging passengers who departed on Qatar Airways flight QR908 from Doha's Hamad Airport (DOH/OTHH), Qatar, on 13 July, arriving at Sydney's Kingsford Smith Airport (SYD/YSSY), Australia, on 14 July, to check for symptoms of measles after two confirmed cases from passengers on the flight.

01 April 2023 - 02 April 2023

● **Moderate risk:** Qatari officials to lift COVID-19 entry requirements for arrivals from China, Hong Kong and Macau from 1 April - Update

Health officials announced that effective from 1 April, all arrivals from China, Hong Kong and Macau, including residents and citizens of Qatar, will no longer be required to show a negative COVID-19 PCR test performed within 48 hours prior to departure. The decision comes after an improved COVID-19 situation in the country.

10 March 2023 - 11 March 2023

● **Low risk:** Authorities ease COVID-19 entry and domestic restrictions – Update

Authorities announced that all COVID-19 restrictions were lifted, apart from a requirement for all individuals to wear masks inside healthcare facilities. Inbound travellers no longer have to obtain medical health insurance to gain entry, and arrivals from China do not need to show a negative COVID-19 PCR test performed within 48 hours prior to departure.

03 January 2023 - 04 January 2023

● **Medium risk:** Officials to tighten COVID-19 entry requirements for arrivals from China from 3 January

Health officials announced that effective from 18:00 local time (16:00 GMT) on 3 January until further notice, all arrivals from China, including residents and citizens of Qatar, will be required to show a negative COVID-19 PCR test performed within 48 hours prior to the departure, regardless of their vaccination or recovery status.





## Summary

Authorities have implemented the country's reopening strategy after previously imposing restrictions on businesses and gatherings. High vaccination rates in Qatar keep infections low. The wearing of facemasks may be required in health facilities.

**What is the current nationwide Policy?:** None

**Policy starts:** 01 November 2022

**Policy ends:** indef

**Policy explanation:**

Officials removed all domestic and international restrictions.

**Policy source:** <https://www.moph.gov.qa/english/mediacenter/News/Pages/default.aspx>

**Last update:** 27 October 2023

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## Infection

**Infection Level:** Low

**Infection rate:** 0.0 cases per 100k in the last 14 days

**As of date:** 09 November 2023

**Hotspots:** -

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## International Travel

## International Flights

**Is there a ban on international commercial flights?** No

**Through what date?** indef

### **Flight Ban Explanation:**

Doha Hamad International Airport (DOH/OTHH) is open with regular daily flights.

Qatar Airways announced the suspension of all its flight operations between Hamad International Airport (DOH/OTHH) serving **Doha** and **Namibia's** Hosea Kutako Airport (WDH/FYWH) serving Windhoek until 30 March 2024, due to operational reasons.

**Last Update:** 27 November 2023

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## Entry and Borders

**Is there a ban on entry for any travellers?**

**Through what date?** indef

**Travellers from where are banned?**

**Land border:** Open

**Maritime border:** Partially Open

### **Entry Rules Explanation:**

All travellers, regardless of whether they are fully vaccinated or previously infected, are allowed entry.

Authorities resumed the visa-free travel agreement for citizens of 95 countries. The length of the visa waiver, which allows tourists to stay for up to 30 or 90 days, varies by nationality, and grants entry for single or multiple trips.

**Entry Rules:** <https://covid19.moph.gov.qa/EN/Pages/Qatar-Travel-Policyy.asp> [x](#)

**Last  
Update:**

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## Testing

**Do travellers need to take a COVID-19 test** No

**When?**

**Is it mandatory or optional?**

**Test Type:**

**Minimum age requirement:**

**Pre-travel test validity, in hours:**

**After arrival test days:**

**Testing Explanation:**

**Testing Rules:** -

**Last Update:** 27 November 2023

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## Health and Travel Documentations

**Do arriving travellers need any health and/or travel documentation?** Yes

**Documentation Explanation:**

### **Health Insurance document**

Officials require health insurance for incoming travellers. Insurance covering accidents and emergency-related conditions only is mandatory for all travellers requiring a visa to enter the country; GCC citizens are exempt.

**Last Update:** 27 October 2023

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## Tracing App

**Do travellers need to use a contact tracing app after arriving?** No

### **Tracing App Explanation:**

There is no mandatory national contact tracing app at this time.

**Last Update:** 27 November 2023

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## Quarantine on Arrival

**Who needs to quarantine on arrival** Some travellers

**Travellers from where need to quarantine?**

**How many days is quarantine?** 5

**Is it self-quarantine or operated by the government?** Hybrid

### **Quarantine Explanation:**

Quarantine is no longer mandatory for travellers arriving from abroad. However, those who test positive for COVID-19 during their stay must adhere to self-isolation measures.

<b>Quarantine Rules:</b>	<a href="https://covid19.moph.gov.qa/EN/Pages/Qatar-Travel-Policy.aspx">https://covid19.moph.gov.qa/EN/Pages/Qatar-Travel-Policy.aspx</a>
<b>Quarantine mandate list:</b>	<a href="https://covid19.moph.gov.qa/EN/Pages/Countries-Classified-Low-Risk-of-COVID-19.aspx">https://covid19.moph.gov.qa/EN/Pages/Countries-Classified-Low-Risk-of-COVID-19.aspx</a>
<b>Last Update:</b>	2023-11-27

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## Exit

**Is there a ban on exit for any travellers?** No

**Are there special requirements to exit?** No

### Exit Requirements Explanation:

**Exit Requirements**

**(URL):**

-

**Last Update:**

27 November 2023

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## Vaccination

**Percent vaccinated with at least one dose:** 98.998 as of 07 May 2023

**Percent fully vaccinated:** 105.83 as of 07 May 2023

**Is vaccination mandatory for entry?** No

**Fully vaccinated are exempt from:** -

**Minimum age for vaccine requirements for travel:**

**Exemptions for vaccine requirements for travel:**

**"Fully vaccinated" is defined by the destination as:**

**Accepted vaccines, validity and special age restrictions:**

**Is mixing of vaccine doses authorised?** Yes

**Are specific combinations of mixed doses required?** No

**"Boosted" is defined by the destination as:**

**Accepted boosters:**

**"Recently recovered" is defined by the destination as:**

Recovery status is valid from days until after .

**Vaccination certificates accepted:**

**Vaccination certificates accepted in the following languages:**

**Recent recovery document required:**

**Recent recovery document accepted in the following languages:**

**Explanation:**

All travellers, regardless of whether they are fully vaccinated or previously infected, are allowed entry.

**Sources:**

<https://covid19.moph.gov.qa/EN/Pages/Qatar-Travel-Policy.aspx>

**Last change to vaccination policy:**

15 March 2022

**Last Update:**

27 October 2023

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## Other International Travel Restrictions

**Exit Requirements Explanation:****Last Update:**

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## Domestic Situation



### Areas on Lockdown

**Last Update:**

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### Areas under Curfew

**Last Update:**

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### Domestic Travel

**Domestic Travel Explanation:**

Rental boats, tourist yachts and pleasure boats are operating at full capacity.

**Last Update:** 27 October 2023

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### Other Domestic Restrictions

All domestic restrictions were lifted.

**Last Update:** 27 October 2023

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## Resources

**Government COVID Site:** -

**Health Dept COVID Site:** <https://covid19.moph.gov.qa/AR/Pages/default.aspx>

**There are no recent incidents**



# Local Travel : ● Moderate Risk

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## Travel Safety

**Air Travel: Doha International Airport (DIA/OTBD)** is modern and safe. Arabic, English and Urdu are widely spoken should you require assistance.

Qatar's national airline, Qatar Airways, offers a very high standard of service and has an impeccable safety record.

Taxis and shuttle buses are widely available to and from **Doha Airport**. Cash can be withdrawn from ATMs at the airport or exchanged at bureaux de change.

**Airspace:** Doha Hamad International Airport (DOH/OTHH) is open with regular daily flights.

Qatar Airways announced the suspension of all its flight operations between Hamad International Airport (DOH/OTHH) serving **Doha** and **Namibia's** Hosea Kutako Airport (WDH/FYWH) serving Windhoek until 30 March 2024, due to operational reasons.

**Borders and Entry:** All travellers, regardless of whether they are fully vaccinated or previously infected, are allowed entry.

Authorities resumed the visa-free travel agreement for citizens of 95 countries. The length of the visa waiver, which allows tourists to stay for up to 30 or 90 days, varies by nationality, and grants entry for single or multiple trips.

**Road Travel:** Driving can be a very frustrating experience in Qatar. Although roads are reasonable, there is little regard for signalling or for other rules of the road. Road rage is not culturally acceptable; you should instead remain calm and drive defensively.

Driving standards are poor, with a correspondingly high rate of road accidents. If you are involved in an accident, you should not abandon or attempt to move your vehicle until the police arrive. Be aware that the police may ask for a call-out fee for coming to an accident scene. If the police consider you to be at fault, you will be unable to leave Qatar until your case has been closed. This may take up to six months.

**Doha** is scattered with roundabouts and drivers are inconsistent when it comes to ceding passage. Usually it is given to larger vehicles. Outside **Doha**, one may encounter large potholes without warning. Always adhere to highway speed limits of 120kph (75mph).

Travellers should obtain an International Driving Permit (IDP) if they plan to drive in Qatar. If you intend to stay for a longer period of time, you can continue to use your licence from your home country for six months. There have been substantial increases in penalties for traffic offences including talking on mobile phones while driving and not wearing a seatbelt.

It is a severe offence to drink and drive and there is zero tolerance for it. Offenders may be detained, fined or deported.

**Maritime Travel:** Many maritime areas in the Gulf are highly sensitive and vessels entering these areas have been attacked, detained or inspected in the past. Travellers should take care when making inquiries about travelling in this area or when visiting ports. Take care when travelling by or taking an excursion on a Dhow as these vessels may not abide by minimum safety standards. Make sure lifejackets are available onboard.

## Public Transport

**Buses:** A bus service runs from **Doha** to the towns of **al-Khor** to the north and **al-Wakra** to the south. Buses regularly ply these main routes but offer little coverage for outlying areas. These are a reliable and safe means of transport for foreign nationals. Women may feel uncomfortable travelling on buses, especially unaccompanied, as passengers are primarily male.

Buses are not always punctual. As a result, taxis are a more efficient means of travel outside of **Doha**.

**Doha's** main bus station, **Al-Ghanim Station**, is located in the city centre on **Grand Hamad Street** and **Al-Ashat Street**.

**Taxis:** Taxis are widely available in urban centres and relatively easy to hail from the street or a taxi stand. The government has its own regulated taxi firm, Mowasalat, which operates countrywide and maintains an impeccable safety record. World-class transport safety training and a modern fleet of vehicles equipped with metres offer further assurances that passenger safety is held to be paramount. Many drivers are able to communicate in both Arabic and English.

The green and blue government taxi fleet of sedans should be differentiated from the smaller, independently-owned orange/yellow taxis, which have recently been phased out. While some may continue to operate, travellers are advised against hiring these as they are likely to be unmetered and may fail to meet country safety standards.

A limousine service and other unmarked VIP units are available for hire at the **Doha Airport** and at major hotels.

## Recent incidents

14 December 2023 - 15 December 2023

- **Low risk:** Iranian officials to allow visa-free entry for nationals of select countries

Iranian officials announced that nationals of select countries will be allowed to enter visa-free as part of policies aimed at boosting tourism arrivals and attracting more visitors from countries around the world. Further details, such as the start date of this policy, were not immediately available.

05 December 2023 - 06 December 2023

- **Moderate risk:** Heightened security expected for GCC Summit in Doha on 5 December

Heightened security is expected in Doha on 5 December when the 44th Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Summit will be held in the city, most likely at Sheraton Grand Doha Resort and Convention Hotel, where previous GCC meetings occurred; multiple Gulf State leaders will be in attendance.

23 November 2023 - 31 March 2024

- **Moderate risk:** Qatar Airways to suspend flights between Doha and Namibia's Windhoek from 23 November 2023-30 March 2024

Qatar Airways announced the suspension of all its flight operations between Qatar's Hamad International Airport (DOH/OTHH) serving Doha and Namibia's Hosea Kutako Airport (WDH/FYWH) serving Windhoek from 23 November 2023 to 30 March 2024, due to operational reasons.

12 October 2023 - 13 October 2023

● **Moderate risk:** Officials of Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, Oman, Kuwait and the UAE to launch unified GCC tourist visa

Officials of Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, Oman, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) plan to launch a new unified tourist visa scheme, which will allow entry of foreigners to all Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, ending the need to obtain different visas for each country. The new visa will also grant longer lengths of stay. Further details are set to be announced later in November.

# Destination Hotspots

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Although sources of popular discontent in Qatar, such as the government's strong relationship with the United States (US), exist, the Qatari government carefully controls criticism, dissent, and freedom of assembly. As a result, hotspots are few and security risks minimal.

# Safety

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## Emergency Numbers

Medical	999	
Police	999	
Fire	999	

**Beaches and Public Areas:** Clubs and hotels have well-maintained beaches but usually have an entrance fee unless you are a guest or member of the facility. Western swimwear is acceptable at clubs and hotel beaches.

Coastal beaches are accessible throughout the countries, however, these offer no amenities. Additionally, these beaches are often rocky so footwear should be worn; Western swimwear may also be considered unacceptable by local residents. When visiting remote areas, it is advisable to tell others where you are going as well as your estimated return time.

**Begging:** The practice of begging is illegal in Qatar and open solicitation is likely to be dealt with severely; begging is rare as a result but does occur. Engagement by visiting foreign nationals may be interpreted as a sign of encouragement and can lead to additional harassment from others nearby. Travellers are advised to ignore advances as politely as possible and to not engage with beggars.

**Corruption:** Visitors are unlikely to come in direct contact with corrupted officials. Bribery is illegal in Qatar and visitors are strongly advised to report solicitation by public officials and police to a higher authority. Residents are unlikely to come in contact with any form of corruption. It should be noted that the court system is slow, bureaucratic and reported to be biased in favour of Qataris and the government. The freedom to start, operate and close a business is restricted by Qatar's regulatory environment. The government has updated a number of commercial laws to encourage economic investment and development but bureaucracy and a lack of procurement transparency still challenge entrepreneurial activities.

**Drugs and Alcohol:** Public consumption of alcohol outside of licensed hotel restaurants and bars is illegal and may incur a prison sentence or prompt deportation. Expatriates living in Qatar can obtain alcohol on a permit system. Penalties for the use

or trafficking of drugs are severe, encompassing lengthy prison sentences and heavy fines.

**Food and Drink:** Uncooked fruits and vegetables should not be consumed. Food from street vendors is not recommended and any dishes that appear to have been sitting for an extended period should be avoided. Fish also poses risks, even if cooked properly, as it may still contain toxins. Products made from unpasteurised milk should be treated with caution.

Tap water, which is mainly produced through desalinating seawater, is generally safe in urban areas, but water quality in rural areas is unreliable. Travellers are advised to drink only bottled water.

**Import and Export:** Qatari customs authorities enforce strict regulations concerning importation of items including narcotics, alcohol, pornography, pork products and firearms. While the import of religious material for personal use is acceptable, import of religious material for the purpose of proselytising is not. All passenger luggage is scanned for contents at **Doha Airport** arrivals hall. DVD's and videos may be subject to scrutiny and subsequently withheld by state censors.

**Law:** Giving someone a cheque that will bounce or the non-payment of bills can result in an imprisonment, fine or deportation from Qatar. If you have unpaid loans, you may find yourself unable to cancel your residence permit or to leave the country.

**Morality Laws:** The judicial system in Qatar is based on Shari'a and prohibits sexual acts between same-sex partners, punishable with up to five years imprisonment. Enforcement of the law is sporadic and foreigners are often simply deported or given the option to leave. Any intimacy in public between men and women is illegal and thus inadvisable.

Incidents involving use of obscene language/gestures often result in arrest, overnight imprisonment and/or fines whether the incident occurs between private parties or involves public officials. Even minor expressions or road rage can attract significant penalties. Take steps to avoid offending or otherwise insulting others in public.

**Photography:** Photography of bridges, sensitive civil infrastructure, government buildings, embassies and military personnel is prohibited. Violations may incur penalties ranging from confiscation of photographic equipment to arbitrary detention.

**Security Services:** Depending upon traffic density and other service calls, police response time in **Doha** can range from five to 20 minutes. However, response times

can be longer during local religious holidays and on weekends. Police officers are generally professional, cooperative and courteous, particularly when assisting and administering at the scene of traffic accidents and infractions. The majority of the uniformed police forces in Qatar are third country nationals; from time to time this presents command, control and communication challenges for their Qatari national leadership. English language skills of first responders may be lacking. Local police enforce laws and arrest violators. Be cautious about reporting suspicious behaviour as police can treat suspects harshly. There are some reports that the police are reluctant to treat violence against women, particularly domestic violence, as a criminal matter. The Mubahathat (secret police), a branch of the Ministry of Interior, deals with sedition and espionage. The army's mission does not include internal security, although the army may be called upon in the event of serious civil disturbances. Nevertheless, a separate agency, the Mukhabarat (intelligence service), is under the armed forces jurisdiction. Its function is to intercept and arrest terrorists and to closely monitor political dissidents. The police routinely monitor the communications of suspects extra-judicially. Although warrants are commonly required for searches, these regulations do not apply in cases involving national security. The security forces reportedly have applied severe force in investigating political and security-related cases. Qatar has a public security force of about 8,000 personnel, including a coast guard and maritime police. The Ministry of Interior is responsible for the 2,500-strong police force.



# Culture

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**Cultural/Political Sensitivities:** Public displays of affection are considered inappropriate and should be kept private.

It is impolite to stare, especially at Muslim women. Never show the soles of your feet, even accidentally or when crossing your legs. Do not photograph people without their permission. Avoid using your left hand to pass food, gesture with or greet people; it is considered inappropriate in Arab culture.

It is normal to haggle in souqs (markets) and elsewhere. As a general rule, if a price is not displayed, you are expected to bargain. It is important to remain polite at all times and not lose your temper in public.

A service charge of 10 percent is normally added to hotel and restaurant bills. If it is not included, a tip of 10 percent is appreciated. Taxi drivers are the exception, as they do not expect a tip, but rounding off the fare is a good practice.

**Religious Sensitivities:** Qatar is a Sunni Muslim country and its citizens, although comparatively liberal and tolerant, tend to dress and behave in a conservative manner. It is advisable for all travellers to dress and behave conservatively. It is not necessary for women to cover their heads. Skirts or trousers should not be excessively short. All travellers should avoid wearing sleeveless tops or shorts. Public drunkenness is not culturally acceptable.

During the month of Ramadan, one should take care when eating and drinking during the day. It may be offensive to those fasting if you do so in public. Smoking should also be approached delicately.

# Specific Traveller Advice

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## Female Travellers

**Local Customs and Laws:** There are some local customs that a female traveller should take into consideration in Qatar. While standards for women's dress are more relaxed in resorts and hotels frequented by tourists, female visitors are advised to wear loose-fitting and concealing clothing with high necks, skirts worn well below the knee and sleeves below the elbow. Visitors are not expected to wear headscarves, except when entering mosques. Attire revealing shoulders and knees may be grounds for arrest. Physical contact between men and women is not socially acceptable. While it is illegal for unmarried local couples to live together or share the same hotel room, foreign national couples will unlikely encounter any problems, particularly if staying at international and high-class hotels. However, some couples will be asked to produce documentation that verifies their marital status when signing in at accommodations, especially if they have an Arab or Muslim name. It is best to identify any male travelling partner as your husband if questioned. Consider wearing a wedding ring. Familiarise yourself with your destination prior to travel, and be respectful and mindful of any cultural sensitivities, which may include dress, behaviour and topics of discussions.

**Safety:** There are some safety concerns female travellers should take into consideration in Qatar. Crime levels are low and sexual harassment is not a widespread concern. However, women who have reported rape to local authorities have been convicted and imprisoned for extramarital sex, which is illegal in the country. Female travellers are advised to contact their home consulate/embassy for legal advice prior to reporting crimes that are sexual in nature to local police. When using private transportation, consider sitting in the front seats which are typically designated for women. Exercise personal safety awareness if walking alone at night. Stick to main, well-lit streets and avoid walking through desolate areas, beaches or unfamiliar neighbourhoods. Refrain from wearing headphones while walking in the evening.

**Health and Wellness:** Women have some access to some specialised gynaecological and reproductive health services, medicines and products in Qatar. While menstrual pads are widely available, tampons are sold at large supermarkets and pharmacies. Abortion is illegal except in cases of severe foetal defects or when a woman's life is at risk. Pregnancy outside marriage may lead to arrest, as it is considered evidence of extramarital sex. Emergency contraceptives are not available. Bring an adequate

supply of oral contraceptives and feminine hygiene products, which may not be available locally.

## **LGBT+**

Homosexuality is illegal in Qatar. It is a criminal and punishable offence, and persons found guilty may be sentenced to life imprisonment or death. There are no legal protections for LGBT+ persons in the country. Same-sex marriage is illegal. LGBT+ activity and persons are not socially accepted. LGBT+ travellers are advised to keep their sexual orientation and gender identities private. Prior to travel, review your privacy settings on social media platforms and reconsider the use of dating applications due to the risk of harassment and possible entrapment by local authorities. Refrain from engaging in any conversations about sexuality or LGBT+ issues. Avoid all public displays of affection, including hand-holding. Book separate hotel rooms. Transgender travellers are advised to have a passport and identification changed to reflect their new gender before travelling.

## **Technology & Communication Risk**

Travellers are likely to face risks related to information and communication technology (ICT) in Qatar.

Internet access and social media have some restrictions. Internet and social media content that are deemed to be anti-government or anti-Islam cannot be accessed freely; any associated social media posting can be unlawful

There are no concerns related to device searches or sensitive technology. Device searches and inspections at the border are unlikely. There are no restrictions in relation to bringing or operating sensitive equipment, which may include photo cameras, satellite phones, drones, and other GPS systems, in the country.

State or criminal penetration of private data is unlikely, but it remains possible. Authorities implement some state surveillance of ICT networks in the country and have the capability to do so.

Travellers should ensure that their ICT usage is compliant with local laws and regulations during their stay in the country. Travellers should expect possible restrictions in accessing specific internet websites/platforms and/or digital services. Posting specific content online may also be regulated. Travellers should note that ICT laws and practices are subject to change on short notice, and travellers are recommended to confirm the legality/appropriateness of their specific ICT needs prior to departure.

Travellers should be aware that the country enforces a limited degree of surveillance of telephone and electronic communications and travellers should remember that communication may be monitored. Online activities may be monitored. Cyber criminal groups may be present in the country. Exercise discretion in deciding to bring sensitive data into the country.

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