

# Traditional Doha

A visitor who descends into Qatar will be welcomed by the eye-catching view of the capital city, Doha. The landscaped, crescent-shaped corniche, the sandy desert backdrop and the sparkling blue waters of the Gulf, are the first glimpse of what awaits a tourist, who arrives for a vacation in the sun-kissed country. Doha is a place filled with desert escapades, water sports, shopping indulgence, modern sporting equipments, historical museums, fine-dining, luxurious attractions and other natural attractions.

**D**oha is situated halfway down the east coast of the peninsula. It is an important cultural and commercial centre and enjoys excellent communications with the outside world through its modern seaport, airport, and telephone links. Doha is the cultural and commercial heart of Qatar and the home to 50 percent of its population. Like many cities in the region, Doha is an intriguing mixture of old and new, of ancient Arabic tradition and modern metropolitan life.

Fronting the Corniche is an interesting sampling of old and new architecture, while on the waters of the bay is a picturesque reminder of







Fort Zubara

times past in graceful wooden dhow boats, some still employed in fishing local waters. The scenically splendid inland sea at Khor El Deid is one of major attractions, among many others, which enriches the tourist products of Qatar. The Al Shaqab Stud farm (owned by the Emir of Qatar) is a must see.

Visits to the souqs are another experience which gives you insight into the traditions of this region. Other popular trips include visits of the Zubara Fort. Qatar also has an excellent 18-hole golf club (Doha Golf Club), an exhibition centre and quite a number of sports facilities which are further being upgraded to international quality standards.

## Attractions

Explore the natural environment, take an exciting desert safari, relax at the many beaches and pool facilities, or enjoy your favourite sport. Golf courses, billiards and snookers tables, bowling alleys, tennis and squash facilities, ice skating rinks. Whatever your interest, there is something for everyone.

## Oryx Farm and Equestrian Club

Visitors can see the oryx in its natural surroundings at the Al-Maha Oryx Farm located in Shahaniya. The national animal of Qatar, the oryx isn't found anywhere else in the world in such large numbers. The beauty of the Arabian horses is well-known throughout the world. The pure-bred Arab show and race horses at Al Shaqab Stud Farm provide a great opportunity to enjoy these horses close up. Other facilities include the Qatar Race and Equestrian Club, where visitors are welcome to view its stables, and the Rayyan Racing and Equestrian Club, where races and show-jumping events are held. Local tour operators can arrange visits to these sites.

## Khor El Deid

A trip to the inland sea (Khor El Deid), in the middle of the desert, is a splendid way to spend the day. Experienced tour operators add to the adventure by expertly steering their



Tribesmen on camel back

four-wheel drive vehicles up and down 60-m sand dunes along the way. Each air conditioned vehicle comes fully equipped with all necessary gear to ensure a safe but dramatic tour of the mysterious desert. As you travel over the sand dunes, you will get an unequalled view of the desert and, if you listen closely, you can hear the sands shift as you descend down the slopes.

After a helter-skelter trip through the dunes, you will arrive at the inland sea. This is an area rich in sea life – among other species, rare dugongs or sea cows can be found here. The water is incredibly clear, and across the sea you can see Saudi Arabia. Unfortunately, the sea is so vast it is very difficult to get a photograph which truly reflects its size. A lunch and swim in the warm inland sea will nicely top off your adventure before you make the journey back to the city. Be sure to bring swimsuit, sunscreen, and don't forget your camera.

## Al Koot Fort

Al Koot Fort was built in the Ottoman period, in 1880, when



Sculpture along the Corniche





Fountain

Doha was little more than a village. At the time this would have been at the outskirts of the town. The Ottomans had arrived in Qata a few years, and were initially welcomed by Sheikh Qassim, although neither his father nor the British were very happy about it.

Sheikh Qassim originally acted as an agent for the Turks, but the love affair was not to last. The Turks decided to teach the Qataris a lesson – only to be soundly beaten in battle. After this defeat they sulked in their fort until finally being kicked out some twenty years

later. You'll find this big square white fort on the outskirts of Souq Waqif. Unfortunately, it's not currently open to visitors.

## Corniche

A stroll along the Corniche is a must during your stay. This seven-kilometre stretch of coastline runs parallel to the warm waters of the Arabian Gulf and is used by walkers and runners, as well as the more adventurous roller-bladers. It offers a relaxing environment for family picnics and a nearby park for children. Fully landscaped with ample parking, the Corniche is the ideal place to unwind.

## Al Wakrah

Is a small town situated halfway be-



Markets



Wind Towers



Picturesque water feature at a public park in Doha



A work of art on the Corniche



The Shimmering Sea

tween Doha and Mesaieed. It is the center for a booming commercial fishing industry and has an old fishing port, which is still in use to date. The town is famous for its fine mosques and many houses reflecting the old Islamic architecture style. There is also a museum displaying among other things traditional Arabic style doors.

### Sealine Beach Resort

Situated 55 km from the capital, the resort offers a large variety of rooms, villas and chalets, all with a sea view. The resort also has many sports and recreational activities and a number of restaurants, alongside with meeting and conference facilities.



Doha

### The Palm Tree Island

The Palm Tree Island is 10-minute boat ride off Doha Corniche. The Island has children and family amenities, a restaurant offering seafood and barbecue meals and a cafe serving snacks and refreshments. There is also a jetty for traditional Dhow boats close to Doha



Sheraton Hotel on the Corniche waterfront. Entertainment City (the Kingdom of Aladdin )

The Kingdom of Aladdin lies in the West Bay area. It has more than 18 game features to suit all age groups. It also has a rest house, an artificial lagoon, a theater and a cafeteria





Doha view

## The Zoo

The zoo lies 20 km from Doha on Salwa Road . It has a varied collection of animals, reptiles and birds as well as a small amusement park for children.

## Al Bida Park

This park lies on Doha Corniche. It has grass areas, children rides, a popular market and restaurants. It opens around the clock and entrance is free of charge. There are other parks on different locations in the capital, besides Al Wakrah and Al Khor parks.



Doha zoo

Entrance is either free of charge or at nominal rates.

## Activities

Doha has a reputation for not being the most exciting place on earth, however, there are a variety of activities, areas and events to take part in. A typical Middle Eastern activity in the afternoons is to find a sheesha cafe and smoke some fruit-flavoured tobacco. One of the best places in Doha is Ras-Naswa at the non-Sheraton end of the Corniche. Located in a picturesque old-style building reminiscent, in colour



A gondola floats along the canal in the Villagio shopping centre

and texture if not grandeur, of the red Mughal structures in India, Ras-Naswa has a nice outdoor garden and serves decent Middle Eastern food.

Doha has several markets which are worth visiting as well. If you want to people-watch affluent young Qataris who are inseparable from their mobile phones, the best places to head are the modern shopping malls, starting with City Centre, not far from the Sheraton.

## Shopping

From the large shopping complexes to



A mall



Downtown

the tiny stalls of the souqs, eager shoppers will find everything they need and more.

Facilities like the City Centre Doha, the largest shopping complex in the Middle East, offer world famous brands plus many exciting family facilities. The markets (souqs) are a wonderful mixture of



Doha view

scents and sights where items are not marked with traditional price tags; haggling is welcomed and expected.

Souq Waqif is the oldest of Doha's traditional markets, originally used by Bedouin traders as a place to buy and sell meat, wool, milk, and other staples. Today it is a maze of alleyways packed

with everything from traditional clothing and incense to camping equipment and hardware.

There are textile souqs and gold souqs, as well as the popular Thursday/Friday Souq where clothes, perfumes, shoes, fabric, household goods, and carpets are on offer.

## Cruises and Water Sports

Surrounded by the Arabian Gulf on three sides of the peninsula, there are plenty of opportunities for water sports and cruising. Two artificial reefs have been built for scuba-diving and create a welcoming environment for marine life. Sailing is a wonderful



pastime and several private companies offer dinghies and windsurfers for rent, as well as sailing lessons for novice and experienced sailors.

A sunset cruise on a traditional dhow in Doha Bay provides a stunning view of Doha at night, while luxury yachts can be rented for half- and full-day fishing trips.

There are both jet-skiing and water-skiing rentals, as well as pedal boats, water cycle, and kayak rentals. And for the extremely adventurous, try parasailing, surfing, or wind-surfing. A day spent on Palm Tree Island is a most welcome opportunity for relaxation with beaches and swimming pools. Major hotels and local tour operators can make the necessary arrangements to suit your schedule.

## Golfing

For the enthusiastic golfer, a visit to the Doha Golf Club is absolutely a must. This 18-hole, 7,181-yard, par 72 championship course was designed by Peter Harradine and has played host to major international golfing championships.

There is also available a nine-hole floodlit academy course and a splendid clubhouse with three restaurants and a golf shop. The long-established Mesaiseed Golf Course offers an outstanding course and has tennis courts and a swimming pool.

## Cinemas

For those who wish to catch the latest film, there are several cinemas located in some of the large shopping centres, including The Landmark and The Mall, as well as Gulf Cinema on C-Ring Road.

## Coffee Shops

Coffee shops have extended hours providing an opportunity to relax and unwind after a night of pleasurable activities.

## Ice Skating/Bowling

The City Centre Doha has ice skating rinks where you can rent skates by the hour. Qatar Bowling Centre offers ten-pin bowling in a 32-lane facility, and the City Centre Doha has two bowling alleys - one for ladies only.

Tennis and Squash Courts/Swimming Pools/Fitness Centres/Spas

The major hotels offer a variety of facilities including tennis and squash courts, swimming pools, and fitness equipment. After exercising, you can relax with a massage at the hotels' health and spa facilities or make an appointment at one of the many Chinese and Indian massage centres.

