
LOCAL COMMUNITY

QATAR OVERVIEW

Qatar is a sovereign Arab state located on the west coast of the Arabian Gulf. With a total land area of just over 4,400 square miles, Qatar is slightly smaller than the state of Connecticut.

Bordered by Saudi Arabia to its south, the Qatar Peninsula is situated on the northeast portion of the much larger Arabian Peninsula and is separated by ocean territory from its other immediate neighbors: Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates.

Over 1.5 million people live in Qatar with more than half residing in and around the capital city of Doha. According to the 2012 World Fact Book, Qatar has the world's highest per-capita income and the lowest unemployment. Its proven reserves of natural gas are the third largest in the world.

HISTORY

Archeological evidence of Qatar's early habitation dates back to the 4th century BC. As Islam swept the region in the 7th century AD, Qataris are said to have aided in the development of the first Islamic naval fleet. In the 16th and 17th century, Qatar aligned with the Turks for protection from occupation and aggression, thus beginning a three century rule by the Ottoman Empire. Sheikh Jasssem bin Mohammed bin Thani negotiated a treaty with Britain in 1868, that recognized Qatar's independence. The British declared the area a British protectorate in 1913 after the withdrawal of the Ottomans and recognized the sovereignty of Qatar under the rule of the Al Thani family. In 1968, Britain declared its intention to withdraw from the Gulf region and Qatar became a sovereign state on September 3, 1971.

GOVERNMENT

Qatar is governed by hereditary rule with power transferred from father to son. For more than 200 years, the Al Thani family has ruled Qatar. The current ruler is the Emir, His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani. His son, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, is the heir apparent.



QATAR FAST FACTS

Population: Over 1,500,000

Ruler: The Emir, His Highness
Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa
Al Thani

State Religion: Islam

Official Language: Arabic but
English is widely spoken

Capital City: Doha

Currency: Qatari Riyal (QR)

Work Week: Sunday-Thursday

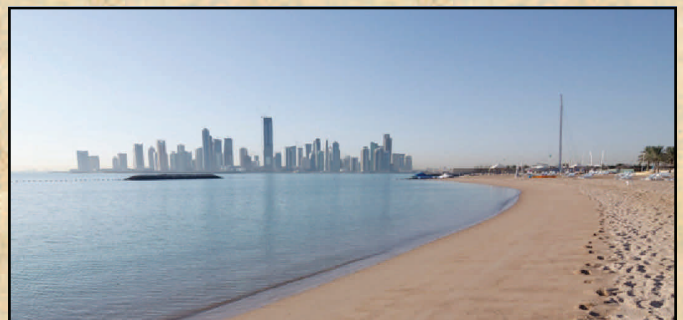
Highest Temperature on Record:
127°F (July 2010)

Official Host of 2022 World Cup

The Prime Minister & Minister of Foreign Affairs is Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim bin Jabr Al Thani.

CLIMATE

Qatar has a moderate desert climate with long hot summers and short mild winters. With year-round sunshine, temperatures range from 74°F in the winter months to around 113°F in the summer months. Nevertheless, temperatures have been known to soar above 120°F on occasion. Sweaters and light jackets are typical in the winter early mornings and late evenings. Qatar is also affected by windblown dust and occasional sandstorms. The country receives an estimated six inches of rainfall each year.



LOCAL COMMUNITY

TIME ZONE CHART

Local time is Greenwich Mean Time (GMT) plus three hours. Also, Qatar does not observe Daylight Savings Time. (With plenty of daylight, there is no need to save any!)

LOCATION	ADJUSTMENT
PACIFIC*	- 8
MOUNTAIN*	- 7
CENTRAL*	- 6
EASTERN*	- 5
GREENWICH (UNITED KINGDOM)	0
CENTRAL EUROPE (GERMANY)	+ 1
QATAR	+ 3
EAST ASIA (JAPAN)	+ 9

*Subtract 1 hour when U.S. is observing DST.

RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES

Islam is the official state religion of Qatar. However, Qatar is generally tolerant of other religions, especially the Abrahamic faiths (Christianity and Judaism), but there have been some incidents of anti-Semitism in the local media. Hinduism, Buddhism, Baha'i, and presently Mormonism (LDS) are not legally recognized.

Practitioners of religions other than Islam can worship in Doha in areas specifically designated by the state. Specifically, the "Church City" communities of faith are large, vibrant, and ethnically diverse. The Catholic Church, for example, has dozens of worship services weekly in several different languages. The Anglican Center houses over 50 different Protestant worshipping communities at present, and they anticipate increasing to over 100 once their building is completed in summer of 2013. Practitioners can worship in areas specifically designated by the state. In addition, some command sponsored families choose to use the chapel services at Al Udeid AB or at the neighboring Army post, Camp As Sayliyah.

Nevertheless, the Qatari government generally enforces religious tolerance, and allows the adherents of most major non-Islamic religions to worship with limited government interference, although there are restrictions. For example, it is against the law to proselytize in Qatar, practice non-Muslim faith in public, and publicly display religious symbols of non-Muslim faiths.

CULTURAL ATTRACTIONS

With its golden beaches and exciting outdoor activities, Qatar is becoming a prime tourist destination and offers more things to see and do than you might imagine.

The Souq Waqif is a popular location to shop and barter for silks, carpets, spices, antiques, gold and authentic Arabian perfumes, whereas strolling along the Corniche offers an amazing waterfront experience. You can also discover some of the world's finest Arabic art collections in the Museum of Islamic Art. Other attractions include the West Bay, the Pearl, the "singing" Sand Dunes, the Doha Golf Club, and the ASPIRE zone. For a full list of things to see and do in Qatar, check out the following websites:

www.qatarhappening.com
qatarvisitor.blogspot.com

www.qatartourism.gov.qa
www.timeoutdoha.com



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SHOPPING

Shopping is a popular pastime in Doha with many opportunities to do so. In addition to traditional market places (souqs), families have access to 15 modern shopping malls with such name brand stores as Gap, Radio Shack, Apple, Banana Republic, Ralph Lauren, Louis Vuitton, and Christian Dior. Some malls even offer indoor ice skating and amusement park rides.

- Al Khor Mall - 105 stores with two levels
www.alkhormall.com / 4453-3445
- Centrepoint (Al Asmkh Mall) - houses a children's entertainment area called Fun City
www.centerpointstores.com / 4428-9141
- City Center Mall - one of the largest malls in the Middle East with 370 shops on 5 levels
www.citycenterdoha.com / 4483-9990
- Emporium - high fashion and exclusive brands
www.emporiumqatar.com / 4437-5796
- Hyatt Plaza - 100 outlets and kiosks
www.hyattplaza.com / 4499-9666
- Lagoon Mall (Zigzag Towers) - boutique mall with 170 outlets over 3 levels
www.lagoonaqatar.com / 4426-7001
- Landmark Mall - 40 stores and a children's area called Circus Land
www.landmarkdoha.com / 4487-5222
- Parco - neighborhood mall with 40 outlets on 4 levels
www.parcomall.com / 4469-7024
- Royal Plaza - 100 shops over 3 levels with high-end outlet stores
www.royalplazadoha.com / 4413 - 0000

QUICK FACT

Local phone numbers in Qatar are eight digits.

CALLING QATAR FROM THE UNITED STATES

1. Dial US exit code (011) +
2. Qatar Country Code (974) +
3. Eight digit local number

- Safari - an extensive and inexpensive range of items
www.safarigroup.net / 4419-1441
- The Centre - single level with beauty/jewelry kiosks
no website / 4444-0202
- The Gate - boutique mall with 4 floors and high-end outlet stores
www.thegate-qatar.com / 4407-7201
- The Mall - features both middle- and high-end stores
themalldoha.com / 4467-8888
- Villaggio - Italian-themed mall with luxury brands and an indoor amusement park
www.villaggiodoha.com / 4433-5555
- Wathnan Mall - upscale stores with Arabic emphasis
no website / 4431-7705

GROCERY SHOPPING



Almost all food is imported so some goods can cost more than in the states. You may also have to visit several different grocery stores to get all the items on your shopping list. Doha boasts many supermarkets (a.k.a. hypermarkets), the larger of which are typically found in shopping malls, and feature a variety of international items. Here are some of the more popular grocery stores:

- Carrerfour - similar to Super Wal-Mart. A little less expensive and much larger than Mega Mart. One store is located in the Villaggio Mall.
www.carrefourqatar.com / 4413-9666

LOCAL COMMUNITY

GROCERY SHOPPING (CONT.)

- **Mega Mart** - located in the Centre Mall, it stocks mostly western products and is popular with the expat community. If you can't find something you really need somewhere else, it's probably here.
no website / 4444-0018
- **Lulu Hypermarket** - located on D-Ring Road, Old Airport. Has a refrigerated and frozen food section with many American and British goods for reasonable prices. You can also find clothing and electronics.
www.luluhypermarket.com / 4466-7780
- **Geant Stores** - located in the Hyatt Plaza Mall. Offers a range of household goods and electronics, a large toy section, and a shop that sells DVDs for reasonable prices. Also sells clothes, household goods and an aisle dedicated to US imports. 4469-2996
- **Spinneys** - located in The Mall (D-Ring Road). Offers a wide range of imported products; prominent trademarks from the U.S. are Kraft, Betty Crocker, Coca Cola, Oscar Meyers, Sara Lee, etc.
www.spinneys.com / no phone # listed

PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

There are three public holidays in Qatar:

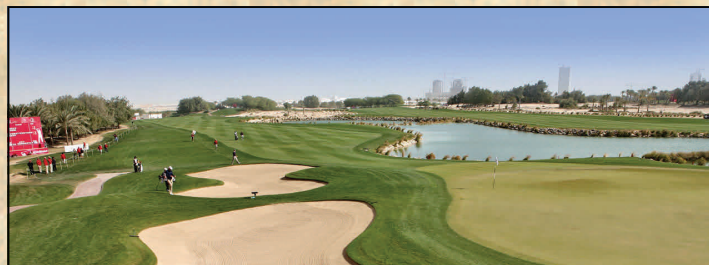
- **Eid Al Fitr** marks the end of Ramadan and is usually commemorated with a 3-day celebration in which almost every business in Qatar shuts down.
- **Eid Al Adha** follows Eid Al Fitr by around 70 days and is marked by a 4-day celebration to honor Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son to God.
⇒ Read the RAMADAN article under the "Must Know Info" section of this guide
- **National Day** commemorates Qatar's unification and independence, and is celebrated on December 18. Most government offices are closed and numerous celebrations held.

Due to the large expatriate population in Doha, many Western holidays are allowed, including Thanksgiving, Christmas, and even Easter.

EVENTS CALENDAR

The following annual events are very popular.

- **Al Khor Fly In** *January*
Brings together pilots from around the Middle East to perform aerial stunts for the general public



- **Qatar ExxonMobil Open** *January*
Doha's ATP men's tennis tournament
- **Qatar International Rally** *January*
A 3-day event across the Qatar terrains
- **Qatar Motor Show** *January*
Showcases the latest models by int'l automakers
- **Commercial Bank Qatar Masters** *February*
An Annual event on the PGA European tour
- **Qatar Int'l Equestrian Festival** *February*
Features some of the fastest horses in the world
- **Qatar International Regatta** *February*
- **Qatar Int'l Sailing Championship** *February*
- **Qatar Ladies Open** *February*
International tennis competition
- **Qatar Open Chess Championship** *February*
- **Terry Fox Run** *February*
Hundreds of participants run to raise awareness for cancer research and the Terry Fox Foundation
- **Halal Qatar Festival** *March*
A week-and-a-half event with opportunities to sample traditional foods and experience local trades
- **Powerboat Racing** *March*
Qatar hosts 2 rounds of the world championship
- **Commercial Bank Grand Prix** *April*
A round of the MotoGP World Championship
- **International Wedding Exhibition** *April*
- **Doha Tribeca Film Festival** *October*
A top international film festival
- **Doha International Book Fair** *December*
Offers a host of books in Arabic, with an increasing array of books in English

LOCAL COMMUNITY

OTHER RESOURCES

For updated information about living in Qatar including health care, transportation, city maps, where to shop and eat, how to dress, sightseeing, leisure activities, banking, and more, check out the following:

“MARHABA” is available in Doha bookstores, major supermarkets and hotels. Updated quarterly.



“QATAR RESIDENT’S GUIDE” is available through Amazon.com.



CURRENCY

Qatar’s monetary unit is the Qatari riyal (QR), which is divided into 100 dirhams. Banknote denominations include QR1, QR 5, QR 10, QR50, QR 100, and QR 500. Coins most commonly found are 25 and 50 dirhams. The dollar exchange rate is very stable, and as of March 1, 2013, is \$1.00 = QR 3.64.

VETERINARIANS AND PET BOARDING

Veterinary services are limited but the standard of care is high. There are no official pet sitter or dog walking services in Qatar, so most residents get neighbors to look after animals for short periods or house them in a boarding facility during longer periods. Demand for pet boarding is high, so it is recommended you book well in advance. Here are a few kennels/boarding services:

- Pampered Pets Kennel & Cattery
www.ppkdoha.net / 5588-4132
- Qatar Veterinary Center
www.qatarvet.com / 4016-1366
After hours emergencies: 6667-5235
- The Veterinary Surgery
www.dohavets.com / 4436-7187

As of June 2011, the Qatar Ministry of Environment requires that any pet arriving in Qatar not already registered with them, must be presented for registration within 48 hours of arrival, have its microchip scanned, original vaccination history reviewed, and documents collected.

As of April 2012, all pets leaving Qatar must be microchipped.

AIRPORT

Hamad International Airport is located at the southern end of the Corniche waterfront area. It is home to Qatar Airways and several other airlines. Qatar is building a brand new airport named Hamad International Airport to replace to the existing facility, and is expected to be ready by 2015.

Www.dohahamadairport.com

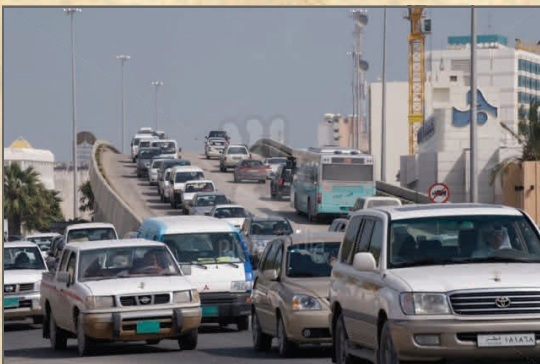
Airport Security: 4465-6420

Customs: 4462-1034

General Inquiries: 4010-6666

Immigration and Passport Control: 4465-6490

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TRANSPORTATION

Getting around in Qatar can be one of the more challenging aspects of living here. There is a lot of traffic congestion, and driving standards and road maintenance are not what most Americans are accustomed to. That being said, driving in Doha requires patience, skill, and self-discipline. As is the case with any overseas assignment, it is the member's responsibility to procure personal transportation. Several options exist in this regard.

- You are authorized to ship one privately owned vehicle (POV); however, Qatar does not allow the import of vehicles that are more than 5 years old.
⇒ Read the POV SHIPMENT article under the "Relocation Matters" section of this guide
- You may choose to lease a vehicle. Local leases range from \$600 to over \$1,600 U.S. dollars per month, depending on the type of vehicle you choose.
- You can also purchase a car in Qatar once your residency is approved. There are both new and used cars available in the local market. Although some U.S. banks will not provide auto loans for vehicles purchased in Qatar, you may be able to secure a personal loan.
- Professional taxi services are available but you may experience extended wait times or delayed response during peak travel hours due to high demand. For this reason, most residents drive their own vehicles or hire a personal driver or local driving service.

The following companies provide transportation on a temporary and/or long term basis. This list is not all inclusive and does not imply endorsement of any company. Also, the concierge service desks at Y Village (4418-2099) and Al Fardan Gardens II (4458-7555) maintain a list of local drivers for hire who provide private driving services on demand.

TAXI SERVICE

- The national taxi company is Karwa (4458-8888)

CAR RENTALS

- AAB Rent a Car (4443-7000)
www.aabqatar.com/en/rent
- Al Muftah Rent a Car (5552-5639)
www.rentacardoha.com
- Al Saad Rent a Car (4444-9300)
www.alsaadrentacar.yellowbulletin.com
- Al Sulaiman Rent a Car (4491-1711)
www.alsulaimancar.com
- Al Mana Rent a Car - Hertz (4448-9944)
no website
- Avis Qatar (4462-2180)
www.avisqatar.com
- Budget Rent a Car (4431-0411)
www.budgetqatar.com
- Euro Dollar Rent a Car (4432-1313)
www.eurodollarrentacar.com
- Europe Car (4466-0677)
www.europcar.com
- F-16 Car Rental (4486-2890)
no website
- Mannai Autorent (4455-8636/8637/8732)
www.mannaiautorent.com
- Mustafawi Rent a Car (4462-1542)
no website
- Oasis Rent a Car (4413-0011)
www.oasiscars.net
- Petra Rent a Car (4413-0404)
www.petrarentacar.com
- Prestige Cars (4420-9102 - yearly lease dept)
(3336-7278 - monthly lease dept)
www.prestigecarsco.com
- Thrifty Car Rental - 4462-1180
www.thrifty.com

ACCIDENT PROCEDURES

If you are in a traffic accident:

1. Notify the Qatar police (Dial 999). Ask for an English speaking operator and do not admit fault.
2. Notify the Al Udeid HNCC (Dial 5589-1157) who will help you interact with the Qatar police.
3. Notify Al Udeid Security Forces (Dial 5589-2832).
4. You should receive a free copy of the police report. Without it, your insurance company will not pay.
5. Do not sign any documents you cannot read.

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COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Here are some of the more popular groups you will find in Doha.

AMERICAN WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION (AWA) OF QATAR. A non-profit organization formed in 1979, AWA meets monthly to share experiences, make acquaintances, provide a resource for those new to Qatar and learn more about local culture. Membership is open to any woman resident of Qatar who is a citizen of the Americas (North, South, or Central) by birth or naturalization, or whose husband is a citizen of the Americas, or who is a permanent resident of the Americas. Go to www.awaqatar.com or email membership@awaqatar.com or call 6671-8139.

DOHA BAY RUNNING CLUB. A group of mainly European expatriates who meet socially and for distance running and swimming. The largest runs start every Friday at 5:30 a.m. at the Corniche 0.00 km marker. Check out their Facebook page.

DOHA GARDEN CLUB. Founded in 2002, the club promotes good gardening practices through the correct usage of appropriate plants and plant materials sensitive to the local environment. Go to www.dohagardenclub.com.

DOHA MUMS. Formed in November 2008, Doha Mums (formerly Doha Expat Mums and Kids) is a community of over 1,400 passionate mothers who come together to celebrate all things family. Go to www.dohamums.com.

QATAR PROFESSIONAL WOMEN'S NETWORK (QPWN). An informal networking group for Qatari and expatriate professional women. Open to any woman regardless of nationality, profession, age, or educational background. Women who are currently not working outside the home and want to maintain their professional network and skills are also welcome. Go to www.qpwn.org or email info@qpwn.org.

QATAR QUILT GUILD. Ladies meet for sewing & technique workshops, contests, information sharing. Go to www.qatarquiltguild.blogspot.com or email qatarquiltguild@gmail.com.

TUESDAY LADIES GROUP (TLG). Formed in February 1976 as the British Ladies Coffee morning. TLG has moved on from there and has become an International Ladies group with over 40 nationalities represented. The group welcomes those new to Doha, shares information and advice about living here, provides activities to join, and supports each other during your time in Qatar. Go to www.tlgdoha.com or email tlgindoha@gmail.com or call 5573-5078.



CHILDREN'S ACTIVITIES

Here is just a small sampling of the many activities in Doha for families with children:

- Aspire Play Park - located inside Aspire Park, Doha's largest park with a lake, jogging track, shaded areas
- Circusland - features a large play area with carousels, arcade games, a soft play area, rides
www.landmarkdoha.com / 4487-6111
- Doha Zoo - home to 1,500 animals
www.dohazoo.net / 4468-2610
- Dream Park - located in the Doha zoo, it is hailed as the largest outdoor amusement park in Qatar
no website / 4468-2610
- Rumeilah Park (Al Bidda Park) - for families only
- Fun City - located in the Centrepoint Mall, has a soft play area and separate imaginative play activities
www.landmarkgroup.com / 4428-9251
- Jungle Zone - jungle-themed activities for kids
4469-4848
- Ray's Reef - a small play area for younger children and babies at the Royal Plaza mall
www.royalplazadoha.com / 4413-0000

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CULTURAL DO'S AND DO NOT'S

(Excerpted from *Marhaba*, Issue no. 55, p. 57)

DO

USE GREETINGS AND FORMALITIES as they are particularly important when dealing with Arabs.

DRESS MODESTLY IN QATAR. Men and women should avoid exposing their knees, shoulders, cleavage or stomach, and not wear tight, revealing clothing out of respect for local customs.

BARGAIN WITH SHOPKEEPERS, which is the norm in the souqs. Always counter the offer with a lower price than you expect to pay and work slowly upwards to what you wish to spend.

USE A HIGH-FACTOR SUNBLOCK for all exposed skin year round. Don't forget the tops of your feet if wearing sandals. Children and fair-skinned people also need a hat or cap.



DO NOT

LOOK OR STARE AT PEOPLE CLOSELY no matter how fascinating their dress. This general courtesy is particularly important in a society where modesty in dress and behavior is mandatory.

ASK AN ARAB LADY FOR INFORMATION OR DIRECTIONS if you are a man. Respect the fact that some Arab ladies are private people in public places. They are more than willing to help other women, so if in a mixed group, let the women do the talking.

BE OFFENDED IF YOUR HANDSHAKE IS REFUSED by a Muslim. Handshakes are most often refused to members of the opposite sex. It is not meant personally, but simply a religious prohibition applicable to Muslims and non-Muslims alike.

TAKE A PHOTOGRAPH WITHOUT PERMISSION of people (including the police or armed forces) or sensitive sites, such as mosques. Arab women and many older people strongly object to being photographed.

BE ANNOYED IF YOUR GUEST/CONTACT IS LATE. Just remember time is more elastic in Qatar.

USE YOUR LEFT HAND FOR EATING with your fingers with Muslims. The right hand is considered more appropriate as the left hand is reserved for personal hygiene.

SIT WITH THE SOLES OF YOUR SHOES or feet facing to your Qatari hosts. It is considered insulting. Equally, don't sit with your back to other guests.

DRINK TOO MUCH ALCOHOL so that your behavior is affected in public. Alcohol in Qatar is a strictly regulated concession and there is **zero tolerance** for drunk-driving, drunkenness or rowdy behavior. There is no minimum blood alcohol content in Qatar.

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Useful Websites

Embassy Services

qatar.usembassy.gov

U.S Embassy in Doha

www.qatarembassy.net

Qatar Embassy in Washington D.C.

Qatar Information

www.expatwoman.com/qatar

Supports individuals and families settling in the Middle East

www.iloveqatar.net

Comprehensive and up-to-date information about Qatar

www.qatarhappening.com

Up-to-date information about events in Qatar

www.gov.qa

Qatar government portal

www.timeoutdoha.com

Guide to Doha's restaurants, nightlife, films, and things to do

www.qatarliving.com

Current event listings

qatarvisitor.blogspot.com

A guide for tourists and residents

qsa.gov.qa

Qatar statistics authority

qatarvisitor.com

Offer tips to first time visitors

www.dohamums.com

Informative articles, insight and expertise to include classified ads

www.digitalqatar.net

A blog for technology enthusiasts

www.onlineqatar.com

A guide to visiting and living in Qatar

News and Media

www.ameinfo.com

Middle East business resource

www.dohanews.com

Provides latest news from World News Network

www.gulf-times.com

One of Doha's three main news sources in English

www.qatar-tribune.com

One of Doha's three main news sources in English

www.thepeninsulaqatar.com

One of Doha's three main news sources in English

www.habibtoumi.com

Independent observations on news in the Arab world

Culture

www.sec.gov.qa

Information on school education in Qatar

www.heritageofqatar.org

Qatar heritage information compiled by Carnegie Mellon

www.ndqatar.com

Information about National Day events

qma.com.qa

Qatar Museums Authority

www.marhaba.com

Qatar's premiere information guide

Travel and Tourism

qatartourism.gov.qa

Qatar tourism authority

www.katarahospitality.com

Hospitality company in Doha

arabianadventureqatar.net

A top tourism company in Qatar

inlandseaqatar.net

A top tourism company in Qatar

www.qia-qatar.com

A top tourism company in Qatar

www.qittour.com

A top tourism company in Qatar