

Destination Information

Culture

Ramadan Special FAQ

What is Ramadan?

Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic calendar and, during this period, people of the Muslim faith fast each day from dawn until dusk. It is also a time for inner reflection and enlightenment.

When does Ramadan begin?

Muslims follow the Islamic lunar calendar, which is about eleven days shorter than the Gregorian calendar. The beginning of the Islamic lunar months depends on the actual sighting of the new moon. Thus Ramadan begins on a different day each year and moves forward. In 2007 Ramadan is expected to start on the 12th or 13th of September.

Are Non-Muslims required to follow Ramadan practices?

Islam is a tolerant religion and respects people of all cultures, races and religions. Non-Muslims are in no way forced to follow Islamic traditions during the month of Ramadan. However, as a sign of respect to the host country, guests are asked to refrain from consuming food, drinks, chewing gum and smoking in public during the fasting hours of the day (dawn to dusk).

Is it OK for non-Muslims to experience Ramadan traditions?

Muslims welcome guests of all religions and cultures and encourage them to learn more about Islam.

Can I eat and drink during the day in Ramadan, and where can I get food and drink?

Only restaurants within hotels are open during the day for non-Muslims. Restaurants will have separate sections open or keep curtains or blinds closed as a sign of respect to Muslim passers-by. In addition, in-room dining and room service is available as normal during the day. However no alcoholic beverages are served during the holy month of Ramadan.

Can I still enjoy the pool and other facilities in the hotel?

Guests staying at Sharq Village & Spa can enjoy the pool and the facilities of the hotel as they normally would.

Should I wear conservative clothing?

It is strongly recommended to wear conservative clothing during the month of Ramadan as a sign of respect.

Are there any changes in working/business hours?

Companies usually do have reduced working hours for their employees during Ramadan, in particular for those that are fasting, however it is business as usual and the normal business hours are covered, in most cases, with employees working different shifts in most organizations in the private sector. The start of the business day in the morning might be a little later than normal.

What activities are available during Ramadan?

Ramadan is a time when friends and families come together and community ties are strengthened. There are a myriad of activities available to residents and visitors alike.

Are there any promotions during Ramadan?

In Ramadan, promotions are widely available and on offer, from shopping malls to restaurants, from TV shows to prize give-away competitions; the entire city illuminates with exciting activities and promotions to participate in.

Is everything closed during the day?

No, not everything is closed during Ramadan. Opening and closing hours do change during the month as opposed to the other days of the year for offices and shops, but are usually open for short hours in the morning, usually from 10.00am to 12.00pm, and they re-open approximately half an hour to an hour after breaking fast until as late as midnight. Parks and other public places open after the breaking of fast and remain open until late at night.

Destination Qatar

Qatar has a rich and vibrant history – a history that can be traced back as far as 4000 BC. Throughout the centuries, the fishing and pearling trades have established Qatar as an important port in the Gulf. Few are the lands as rich in natural wonders and adventures as the sands of this beautiful country, from the wildlife excursions to the tourist attractions.

Climate

Doha boasts year round blue skies with very little rain fall or cloud cover. The summer stretches from May to September with highs just breaking 100° F or 40° C. The shallow waters of the Gulf remain quite warm throughout the year, cooling off a bit by the late winter and early spring.

Month

Avg High

Avg Low

Avg Precip.

January

71°F

22°C

55°F

13°C

0.5 in

1 cm

February

73

23

56

13

0.7

2

March

80

27

62

17

0.6

2

April

89

32

69

21

0.3

1

May

100

38

77

25

0.1

0

June

106

41

81

27

0

0

July

106

41

84

29

0

0

August

105

41

84

29

0

0

September

101

38

79

26

0

0

October

95

35

74

23

0

0

November

85

29

67

19

0.5

1

December

75

24

59

15

0.1

0

General Information

For your convenience, Sharq Village & Spa has provided the following information to help you plan and enjoy your stay with us.

The Religion

- Qatar is an Islamic state. The Holy Quran guides the religious belief, in law, business practices and family traditions.
- Mosques are located throughout the country from which calls to prayer are announced throughout the day.

The Locals

Qataris distinguish themselves by wearing traditional clothing:

- The thobe (a floor-length white garment) with a ghutra headdress (either solid white or a pattern of red and white) for men
- The abayah (a floor-length black robe) with a shayla headdress (black or multicolored) for women, who wear a full or a partial face veil.

Language

- Arabic is the official language but English is widely spoken too.

Clothing

- Cotton or lightweight clothing is suitable for daywear
- Proper evening attire is recommended when dining in restaurants
- Skirts or shorts above the knee should be avoided, as should sleeveless tops that expose the shoulders or upper arms.
- Very tight or revealing clothing should also be avoided.

Cultural differences

- Always accept an offer of beverage or food as it is considered impolite to refuse. Though, you will not be expected to eat it all and make sure you always use your right hand for eating. You may be invited for dinner or any other social function by a Qatari but it does not necessarily include your spouse (unless clearly stated)
- Shaking hand is understood by Qatari culture but working women who wish to do so normally extend their hands first.
- Qataris are known for their warm hospitality; if you make any cultural mistake your apologies will be warmly accepted.
- Intimacy in public between members of the opposite sex is highly considered inappropriate but good friends, including men, greet each other with a series of kisses on the cheeks and close male friends may walk hand in hand.
- There are no restrictions in clothing although it is recommended that you dress modestly. Women should avoid wearing short dresses and shorts and low-necked shirts.
- Be aware not to take images of Qatari women without explicit permission, some older Qatari men do not like to have their picture taken.
- Photography of military and government buildings and associates institutions is not permitted.

Alcohol

- It is not allowed to import any alcohol into the country. For expatriates there is a license-based system allowing them to purchase alcohol, and major hotels offers alcoholic beverages in restaurants and lounges.
- Other restrictions include pork meat, which you cannot purchase or transport into the country, in addition pictures or magazines of an adult nature are prohibited.

Visas

Except for GCC nationals, all visitors to Qatar (for business or tourism) require a visa Requirements do change from time to time and it is always advisable to check with your nearest Qatari embassy or with your airline well in advance of your visit.

Currency

- Transactions are done in the Qatar Riyal (QR).
- 3.65 is equivalent to US\$1
- A currency exchange service is available at the hotel's front desk
- You may also change your money or cash travelers checks at banks
- Remember to bring along your passport to help facilitate exchanges

Phone

- The country code is 974; there is no city code
- International calls are made by first dialing 0 followed by the numbers

Public Holidays

- The two major public holidays in Qatar are religious ones: Eid al Fitr and Eid al Adha
- Eid al Fitr marks the end of the fasting month of Ramadan, which is the ninth month of the Islamic calendar, because this calendar is based on the lunar months, dates are therefore not fixed, thus holidays will only be determined 24 hours in advance.
- Eid al Fitr is marked by a three-day celebration where almost every business in the country shuts down.
- Eid al Adha follows approximately 70 days after Eid al Fitr and is marked by a four- day celebration where almost every business in the country shuts down.
- Besides these two religious celebrations there are two other fixed holidays:
 - Accession Day, June 27.
 - Independence Day, September 3.

Tips for Healthcare relocation

- Obtain vaccinations before you travel and be sure to carry records with you.

- Health insurance must be current, carry contact and policy number with you.
- Medical/Emergency number in Qatar is: 999

Electrical Appliances

- 240 volts, 50 cycles, AC and British-type three pin plugs

Time

- GMT +3 hours

Attractions in and around Doha

Museums of Qatar

Qatar National Museum

The award-winning Qatar National Museum on the Doha Corniche was designed around the Fariq Al Salata palace of Sheikh Abdullah Bin Qassim Al-Thani and dates back to 1901. It underwent restoration in the early 1970s and the original buildings provided an ideal background in which to display relics of traditional Qatari life, Bedouin artifacts, jewelry, costumes and traditional medicine.

Wind Tower House

One of Qatar's very few remaining "wind tower" houses, just off Grand Hamad Street in Najada Shopping Plaza, this was formerly used as an ethnographic museum. Built in the 14th century Hejira (Muslim) calendar and first restored in 1982, the building has been taken over by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Agriculture and further restored to serve as a Gulf Architectural Heritage Centre. Although currently closed to the public it provides a popular photo opportunity. The square wind tower known locally as badghir, was used in the Gulf prior to the days of electricity to provide a very efficient form of natural "air conditioning"

Forts and Castles

Murwab Fort

A journey to Qatar's west coast reveals the impressive 14th century Murwab Fort.

Al-Ghuwair Castle

Al-Ghuwair Castle was built during the early 19th century and is now in ruins. It was constructed with thick walls of stone and mud in a rectangular shape.

Al-Thughb Fort

Located on the northwest part of the country, approximately 110 kilometres from Doha, al-Thughb Fort is rectangular with four towers – a common design for desert forts erected between 17th and 19th centuries.

Tourist Attractions

Inland Sea

There are a number of attractions worth visiting in close proximity to Doha, the most notable of which is Khor Al Udeid, or "the Inland Sea". Qatar, along with Namibia, is one of only two countries in the world to be blessed with such a unique and sprawling body of desert water. The dramatic contrast between the towering sand dunes and the expansive landlocked Sea is a breathtaking sight that attracts thousands of tourists and locals every year.

Oryx Farm

The nature reserve in Al Sheehaniya, is home to the largest herd of Arabian Oryx in the world. Visitors can see at first hand the graceful creature that some say is the origin of the legend of the unicorn. The Arabian Oryx was once threatened by extinction; these graceful creatures now live and breed as protected herds in Qatar. The Arabian Oryx is Qatar's national symbol.

Pearling Rediscovered

The challenges and mysteries of pearling, once the mainstay of the Qatari economy is revealed by pearl divers at the Qatari Heritage Village situated in the Rumeilah park, during special festivals and celebrations. Find out about the life of the crew on the pearling dhows and the simple equipment they used, listen to the stories about how the divers located the

pearl beds and searched for the best oysters, watch how they opened the shells and searched for the pearls, see how the pearls were sorted and stored.

Sport Activities

Sporting events are very much appreciated in Qatar. Soccer (Football) is the national sport, tennis being the second favorite (Hosting the ATP Khalifa Stadium Tournament) You can also find an 18 hole golf course (home of the Qatar Master's Tournament in March), horse riding courses and shows, sailing (including an international regatta), jet skiing, scuba diving and swimming. And last but not least the very famous camel races during the cooler months.

Shopping

Qatar offers an exciting blend of shopping experiences. Doha's downtown souqs - traditional Arabian markets, provide a fascinating contrast to the modern shopping arcades uptown. At the souqs, "bargaining" is a way of life. Aside from a cultural experience, visitors will find aromatic herbs, spices, materials, traditional gifts and an abundance of gold jewelry, all in close proximity. The sophisticated malls offer the latest fashions, sports shop and household items catering to the up market shopper. Major shopping malls are usually open from 10:00 until 22:00 but the majority of stores are closed on Friday mornings, opening only at 16:00. Timings for independent stores vary but are generally open from 08:30 to 12:30 and then from 16:00 to 21:00. Many independent stores are closed all day Friday, although some do open late afternoon.

Tours and Excursions

For tours and excursions, please contact the concierge at (974) 425 6666 ext. 6135 for bookings and more information. Subsection 5C - Seasonal Highlights in and around Doha

- January
- Qatar Exxon/Mobil International Tennis Tournament
- Qatar Golf Open Tournament
- Fencing Grand Prix
- Qatar Motor Show
- Qatar Commercial Bank's Golf Masters Tournament January - February
- Qatar Cycling Federation
February
- Qatar International Sailing Championship
- Qatar Table Tennis Federation
- Doha Jewelry and Watches Exhibition
- International Horses Beauty Contest February-March
- Qatar Agriculture Exhibition
- Qatar/Total Open Women's Tennis Championship
March
- International Trade Fair (ITF)
- Qatar International Equestrian Jumping Event
- International Squash Tournament
- Qatar Masters International Chess
April

- Qatar International Property and Investment
- International Wedding Expo - Doha (IWED) April–May

- Education, Training and Development Exhibition
- Food and Beverage Exhibition
May

- International Furniture and Decor Exhibition (INFDEC)
June

- H.H. The Emir Handball
- Doha International Basketball
- Qatar Open Body Building Championship for Men (Seniors and Youths)
July

- Qatar Summer Wonders
September

- Qatar Golden Cup Body Building Championship
- GCC Men's Basketball Championship
September-October

- Holy month of Ramadan
November

- Qatar Classic Squash Championship
December
Doha International Book Fair