

Relocation guide:

Qatar

Our guide working and living overseas



Working in Qatar

Adjutting out into the Persian Gulf with Saudi Arabia as its only land border, the State of Qatar packs a lot of economic punch in view of its relatively small size.



THE KEY FACTS:

Capital: Doha

Population: 2,000,000

Official Language: Arabic



A former British protectorate, which became an independent sovereign state in 1971, Qatar is an Arabic-speaking country with English as the second language.

Qatari nationals make up less than 15% of the population of around two million, and foreign workers have skewed the gender balance to approximately 75% male, 25% female.

Rich in oil and natural gas, the country's economic centre is its fast-growing capital, Doha, situated on the coast, its skyline dominated by skyscrapers.

An Islamic state with the majority of Qataris following the orthodox Wahhabi branch of Islam, the country is home to the Al-Jazeera TV station, which broadcasts worldwide. The currency is the **Qatari Riyal (QAR)**, the international dialling code is +974 and the time zone is GMT + three hours.

Sectors

One of the fastest growing economies in the region, Qatar offers numerous opportunities for engineers with ambition. Numerous projects have been planned under the auspices of the Qatar National Vision for the year 2030, including many economic and environmental initiatives.

A major exporter of oil and the world's leading exporter of Liquefied Natural Gas, Qatar is currently embarking on a programme of major expenditure in infrastructure, health and education. Further engineering projects are planned ahead of the 2022 World Cup, including the construction of 10 new stadiums, a new port, road systems and other projects relating to infrastructure from groundworks to water treatment works.

Significant investment is being made in the country's railways under the Qatar Rail Development Programme (**QRDP**), including a metro system in Doha, Light Rail Transit and long-distance passenger and freight lines.



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Although a new economic leadership team appointed by the government is looking to address issues such as research and development, efficiency and economic diversification, Qatar continues to rely heavily on the expertise of skilled foreign engineers.

ABOUT QATAR

Locations & Culture

While more than half of the country's population live in **Doha**, major towns outside the capital include the second largest city, **Wakra**, in the south and **Al-Khor** on the north coast, near the oil fields and LNG terminal.



Although the central part of the country is largely desert, the urban areas and coastal resorts offer sports clubs and other social opportunities and the expat community is welcoming. In addition to soccer, popular sports include drag racing at the Qatar Racing Club, tennis and cycling.

Opportunities exist for engineering professionals in a wide range of sectors, from infrastructure and construction to power generation and transport.

Alcohol is served in the smarter hotel bars and restaurants and in places such as golf clubs, or you can apply for a permit to buy alcohol to drink at home. Beach life can be enjoyed all year round but be aware that temperatures can reach 50°C with high humidity in the summer months.

National holidays include the three-day religious festival **Eid al Fitr**, which marks the end of Ramadan, and **Eid al Adha**, a four-day religious celebration that takes place 70 days later. National Day, celebrating Qatar's unification and independence, is held annually on 18 December.

A Muslim country, Qatar is more liberal than some in the region and the crime rate is low; however, women are required to dress modestly and homosexuality is illegal. Qatari nationals are hospitable but if invited to dine with a local, avoid showing the soles of your feet and don't eat with your left hand.

What our consultants say...



"Qatar will host the FIFA World Cup in 2022 for which it will build 12 new eco-friendly iconic stadiums, some of which will be able to host up to 80,000 people. The total spend on construction in Qatar leading up to 2022 is expected to top US \$50 billion."

- **James Robinson**, Consultant



"Forbes has just ranked Qatar as the richest country in the world, with a per capita income of more than \$88,000. This wealth directly relates to the 2030 vision which includes some of the most exciting and extravagant infrastructure projects the world has ever seen."

- **Dave Jenkins**, Senior Consultant

Get in touch:



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WHAT TO EXPECT

Transport & Infrastructure

Because of its geographical position, Qatar will welcome most business visitors through the gates of the new **Hamad International Airport (DOH)**, which opened in 2014.

Petrol may be eminently affordable but driving in Qatar can be a challenging experience and there's a zero-tolerance policy for drink driving. An International Driver's Licence is required for a stay of over a week, then a Qatari Driver's Licence once you have your resident permit.

The bus system is basic but improving and there's a government-run taxi service.



Health care is free, but with long waiting times you may prefer to ask for private health insurance as part of your relocation package.

WHAT TO EXPECT

Living Costs & Working Requirements

The Qatari work culture is generally relaxed and salaries are high. Most engineers will be sponsored by an employer, which will allow access to a Work Residence Permit, usually valid for between one and three years.

Although securing a work visa should be relatively straightforward, if you have a family, you must be married to bring in your partner and children. They will need to arrive on a special entry visa before applying for a resident permit.

Sponsor companies should be able to guide you through the process; some may expect you to settle in before bringing your family over. Schools are good but heavily oversubscribed because of the high number of expats – apply early for a place and ask for a contribution towards fees from your company.

Expat accommodation is often large and newly built, but it can be expensive, so check whether the sponsor company will contribute towards the costs. Petrol is extremely cheap but everyday items, including food (most of which is imported), clothing and electronics, are pricey.

→ “The Qatari work culture is generally relaxed and salaries are high.”

Permission to leave and enter the country may be controlled by your Qatari sponsor, so it's important to ask in advance what the company policy is.

In conclusion

Despite the cultural differences that Westerners may experience on arrival, Qatar is a thriving and welcoming country with a lot to offer, including excellent salaries and a good working environment.

With so many engineering projects planned or under way, including those initiated under the auspices of the Qatar National Vision for the year 2030, skilled engineers are much in demand.

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