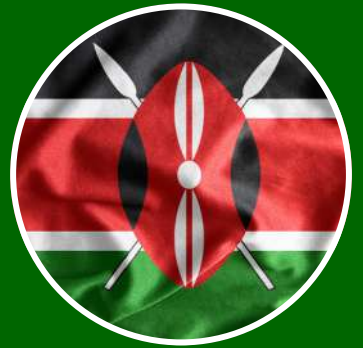




MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AND DIASPORA AFFAIRS
STATE DEPARTMENT FOR DIASPORA AFFAIRS

PRE-DEPARTURE HANDBOOK FOR QATAR

A Guide for Kenyan Diaspora Workers



JANUARY 2025



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► INTRODUCTION

Qatar is a rapidly growing Middle Eastern country known for its strong economy, modern infrastructure and high demand for skilled and semi-skilled workers.

As a major hub in the Gulf region, it offers opportunities in construction, hospitality, healthcare, engineering and domestic work.

This guide provides essential information for Kenyan diaspora workers relocating to Qatar.

General Information about Qatar

- **Capital City:** Doha
- **Official Language:** Arabic (English is widely spoken)
- **Currency:** Qatari Riyal (QAR)
- **Calling Code:** +974
- **Driving:** Right-hand side of the road
- **Time Zone:** GMT+3



Emergency Numbers

- **Fire:** 999
- **Police:** 999
- **Ambulance:** 999



TRAVEL DOCUMENTS



For a Kenyan Diaspora Worker to travel to Qatar, the essential documents include:



- ▶ No Objection Certificate (NOC) from the Qatari employer
- ▶ Proof of accommodation
- ▶ Travel insurance
- ▶ Proof of sufficient financial means

Work Visa

The Qatari employer is responsible for applying for and renewing this permit annually

Work Permit

Upon arrival in Qatar, workers must apply for a Residence Permit (Qatar ID - QID) within 90 days.

Residence Permit

A formal contract detailing job terms, salary, and working conditions.

Employment Contract

Must be valid for at least 6 months beyond the intended period of stay in Qatar


Valid Passport

While Qatar does not use a social security number system like some countries, mandatory health insurance is required.

Health Insurance



QATARI CULTURE & TRADITION



Understanding and respecting Qatari customs is crucial for a successful transition. Qatar is a country rooted in Islamic traditions and Arab heritage, blending modern sophistication with conservative values.

Titles: Address individuals formally, such as “Doctor,” “Engineer,” “Sheikh,” or “Mr./Ms.” followed by their first name. In Arabic-speaking contexts, it is polite to use “Sayyid” (Mr.) and “Sayyida” (Mrs./Ms.), particularly during formal introductions. Avoid addressing elders or superiors by their first name unless you have been specifically invited to do so.

Social Etiquette: Hospitality holds a significant place in Qatari culture. When greeting men, handshakes are customary but should be gentle and brief. Refrain from initiating physical contact with women unless they do so first.

A friendly “As-salamu alaykum” (Peace be upon you) is a traditional greeting. You may be offered Arabic coffee (qahwa) or dates, accepting these gestures is a sign of respect.

Professional Culture: The organizational structure follows a hierarchical model. Building trust and fostering relationships are often emphasized prior to making business decisions. The workplace dress code is conservative, requiring employees to wear neat and modest business attire.

Dress Code: In public areas, a modest dress code is required for all individuals. Women are expected to cover their shoulders and knees, while men should refrain from wearing shorts in formal or traditional environments. Swimwear is permitted at private hotel beaches but is not appropriate in public spaces.

Religious Practices: Islam plays a vital role in everyday life. The call to prayer (adhan) is heard five times each day, with prayer times being strictly followed, leading some businesses to temporarily halt services. During Ramadan, the holy month of fasting, specific etiquette must be observed: eating, drinking, or smoking in public is prohibited from sunrise until sunset.



RELIGION IN QATAR

Religion is a central pillar of life in Qatar, deeply influencing the country's legal system, social norms, cultural practices, and daily routines. **Islam** is the state religion, and while **Qatar** is welcoming to people of all faiths, it expects respect for its Islamic traditions from residents and visitors alike.

Five Pillars of Islam in Public Practice:

- ▶ Shahada - Declaration of faith
- ▶ Salat - Daily prayers
- ▶ Zakat - Almsgiving and charity
- ▶ Sawm - Fasting during Ramadan
- ▶ Hajj - Pilgrimage to Mecca

The State Grand Mosque in Doha, one of the largest, offers guided tours for non-Muslims at specific hours. (modest dress is required).

Islamic Holidays

- ▶ Eid al-Fitr celebrates the end of Ramadan with prayers, feasts, and family gatherings.
- ▶ Eid al-Adha honors Prophet Ibrahim's willingness to sacrifice his son, involving animal sacrifice and charity to the poor.

Qatar acknowledges the right to practice different religions, the State features a s Religious Complex located in Doha.





LANGUAGE

The official language in **Qatar** is **Arabic**, but **English** is widely spoken, especially in Doha and within business, education, and healthcare sectors.

In more traditional settings or with older generations, Arabic may be preferred. While English is generally sufficient for most day-to-day tasks, learning a few basic Arabic phrases can enhance communication and show respect for the local culture.

Key Phrases to Learn

English Phrase

Arabic

Pronunciation

Hello

السلام عليكم

As-salamu alaykum

Peace be upon you (reply)

وعليكم السلام

Wa alaykum as-salam

How are you?

كيف حالك؟

Kayfa haluk?

Thank you

شكراً

Shukran

You're welcome

عفواً

Afwan

Goodbye

مع السلامة

Ma'a as-salama

Yes / No

نعم / لا

Na'am / La

Excuse me / Sorry

عفواً / آسف

Afwan / Asif

I don't understand

لا أفهم

La afham



كورنيش الدوحة

Waterfront in Doha



Qatari cuisine is a reflection of its Bedouin roots, maritime traditions, and multicultural influences. Meals are more than just sustenance—they're social experiences that emphasize hospitality, generosity, and family.

Machboos (Majboos): Qatar's national dish, this slow-cooked rice dish is flavored with spices and usually served with lamb, chicken, or seafood.

Thareed: A savory stew poured over thin crispy bread, often described as an Arabic version of lasagna.

Harees: A creamy porridge of wheat and meat, especially eaten during Ramadan.

Saloon: A traditional spiced vegetable and meat stew, often served with bread.

Balaleet: A sweet and savory breakfast dish made with vermicelli noodles, eggs, and spices.



Sambusa: Fried or baked pastry filled with spiced meat or vegetables, popular during Ramadan.

Shawarma: Grilled meat wrapped in Arabic bread with garlic sauce or tahini.

Falafel & Hummus: Found in many local eateries, especially in souqs.

Pork is strictly prohibited due to Islamic dietary laws.



Alcohol consumption is regulated Only available in licensed hotels and restaurants; public intoxication is illegal and punishable.

Halal food (prepared according to Islamic law) is the standard and is clearly labeled in markets and eateries.



HEALTH & SAFETY

Qatar's healthcare system offers a range of modern services through both public and private sectors.

To access public services at reduced rates, individuals need a Qatar Health Card.

Non-citizens can also benefit from these services by registering at Primary Health Care Centers (PHCCs) with a residence permit and Qatar ID.

Qatar's private healthcare system, featuring facilities like Sidra Medicine, Al Ahli Hospital, and Doha Clinic, offers shorter wait times and high-quality services.

While more expensive than public options, private healthcare provides efficiency, multilingual support, and advanced equipment.

Health insurance is mandatory for all foreign residents and visitors in Qatar. Employers must provide insurance for employees.

Essential coverage includes emergency services, outpatient and inpatient care, specialist consultations, medications, and diagnostic tests.

Before traveling, ensure your routine vaccinations are current, including:

- ▶ COVID-19
- ▶ Tetanus-Diphtheria
- ▶ Hepatitis A & B
- ▶ Measles, Mumps, Rubella (MMR)

Qatar is considered one of the safest countries in the world, with extremely low rates of violent crime and a strong police presence.

- ▶ Pickpocketing and petty theft are rare, but always remain alert in crowded areas such as souqs, airports, and malls.

Drinking Water: In Qatar, tap water is treated and considered safe; however, one can opt for bottled or filtered water for drinking.

Hotels and restaurants provide safe, filtered water, and bottled water is both widely available and affordable.

CURRENCY & BANKING

The **Qatari Riyal (QAR or QR)** is the official currency in Qatar. Although the rates are fixed, it is advisable to check for rate variations during currency exchange.

Opening a Bank Account

Opening a local bank account is essential for salary payments, rent, and daily expenses.

Required Documents:

- ▶ Valid passport with residence visa
- ▶ Employment contract or salary certificate
- ▶ Qatar ID (QID) – mandatory for residents
- ▶ No Objection Certificate (NOC)
- ▶ A local address



ATMs and Payments

ATMs can be found throughout Qatar in locations such as malls, hotels, banks, and gas stations. Most of these ATMs support international cards, including Visa, MasterCard, Cirrus, and Plus. Additionally, cashless payment options are commonly used across the country.

Mobile Money

Qatar's banking system is highly advanced in digital technology. Popular apps like QNB Mobile, CBQ Mobile, and Doha Bank Mobile Banking are widely used, offering support in both Arabic and English.

Sending Money Back Home:

You can remit money from Qatar using services such as Western Union, MoneyGram, Wise (formerly TransferWise), Remitly, and WorldRemit, which are popular and widely available. These services often allow direct deposits to mobile money platforms like M-Pesa.



DRIVERS & LOCAL TRANSPORT

Qatar's public transport, centered in Doha, is modern and expanding quickly.

- ▶ Doha Metro: Connects key areas like the airport, West Bay, and Education City, offering an efficient commute.
- ▶ Mowasalat (Karwa) Buses: State-run buses link Doha with nearby towns, providing an affordable travel option.

The Karwa Bus and Qatar Rail apps offer schedules, route planning, and fare details.

Driving is the most common mode of transportation. Upon arrival, you can drive using your Kenyan driver's license, accompanied by an International Driving Permit (IDP), for up to six months.

The roads are well-maintained, and signs are available in both Arabic and English.

Taxis and Ride-Hailing: Karwa Taxis (light blue) can be booked through the app or hotline. Uber and Careem are also popular due to their convenience.

▶ ACCOMMODATION

Qatar offers a variety of accommodation options, from luxurious furnished apartments to more budget-friendly shared housing.

- ▶ Rental agreements in Qatar usually span 12 months and often require several key documents. Upscale areas like West Bay and The Pearl tend to be more expensive, while neighborhoods such as Al Sadd, Al Mansoura, and Wakrah offer more budget-friendly options.
- ▶ Given Qatar's hot climate, air conditioning is a necessity, but it can lead to high electricity bills, especially during the summer months.



▶ **WORKING ENVIRONMENT**

Work Culture: Sunday to Thursday, usually from 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM (40-48 hour week). Friday is the official rest day, and Saturday may also be off depending on the employer.

Workplace Etiquette: Qatari workplaces emphasize professionalism. Modest, neat dress is expected. Building strong interpersonal relationships is also key to professional success.

Employee Rights: Qatar's labor regulations provide essential protections, such as a minimum wage, annual paid leave, public holidays, and gratuity pay at the end of a contract. Overtime work is typically compensated as well. It is crucial to thoroughly review and comprehend contracts before signing.



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QATAR GENERAL LAWS

Work Rights: Diaspora workers must have a valid work visa and employment contract. Workers are entitled to protections under Qatar's labor law, including regulated hours, minimum wage, and safe working conditions.

Immigration & Residence:

Obtain a valid visa and be sponsored by an employer or family member.

After arrival, residents must apply for a Qatar ID (QID), which serves as the legal residence permit.

Social Security & Healthcare:

While Qatar does not have a universal social security system for foreign workers, mandatory health insurance is required for all residents.

Non-Discrimination:

Qatar's labor law prohibits discrimination.

Workers have the right to file complaints through the Labour Dispute Settlement Committee.

Family Reunification: Residents with sufficient income and valid housing may apply to sponsor immediate family members (spouse, children) under a Family Residence Visa.

Unemployment:

If a contract ends or is terminated, the worker may seek new employment under Qatar's labor mobility system without needing an exit permit.

Legal Protections:

Kenyan Diaspora Workers have the right to legal representation and are encouraged to report any instances of abuse or exploitation.

Education & Integration:

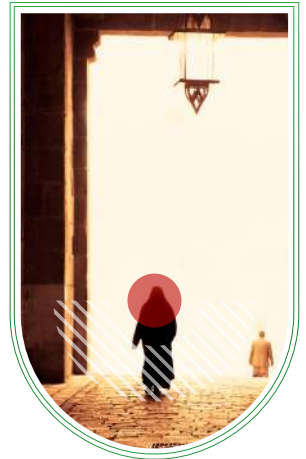
One can access language classes, cultural workshops, and community associations.

Private and international schools are available for dependents.

▶ DO'S & DON'TS

- ▶ Try to learn a few basic Arabic phrases to better understand and engage with the local culture.
- ▶ Respect Islamic customs, especially around dress codes, prayer times, and during Ramadan.
- ▶ Keep important contacts and emergency numbers (like 999 for police or ambulance) readily available.
- ▶ Be courteous and professional at work, respect for hierarchy and formality is important in the Qatari workplace

- ▶ Don't discuss politics, religion, or Qatar's leadership in public or online.
- ▶ Avoid public displays of affection or inappropriate dress in public areas.
- ▶ Don't take photos of people (especially women), mosques, or government buildings without permission.
- ▶ Don't assume all expat experiences are the same: Qatar's multicultural society includes many perspectives, so take time to understand the diversity.



CONCLUSION

Moving to Qatar is a unique opportunity to explore a new culture, gain international work experience, and grow personally and professionally. By learning about Qatari customs, preparing for daily life, and respecting local laws and traditions, you'll be well-positioned to enjoy a smooth transition and make the most of your stay in Qatar.

*SAFE TRAVELS, AND MAY YOUR STAY IN QATAR BE ENGAGING,
EMPOWERING & MAY YOU PROSPER!*

