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Qatar, tourism

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The State of Qatar occupies 11,586 km² (4,473 mi²) (Figure 1) and has a population of about 2.12 million of whom Arabs constitute 40 %, Indians 18 %, Pakistanis 18 %, Iranians 10 %, and others 14 % (CIA 2013). Qatar is rich in hydrocarbon resources such as natural gas and oil. They are among the main sources of revenue, but tourism is also being promoted to diversify the country's economy.

Tourism is expected to play a significant role in the country's social and economic development (Qatar General Secretariat 2012). The direct contribution of ► [travel](#) and tourism to GDP in 2013 was US\$3.74 bn (QAR13.6bn) or 1.8 % of GDP. This is expected to rise by 9.1 % to \$4.09 bn (QAR14.9bn) by the end of 2014. The economic activity is generated by industries such as hotels, travel agents, airlines and other passenger transportation services, the activities of restaurants, and leisure industries. It is estimated that about 86,000 jobs are supported by the travel and tourism businesses. Its direct contribution to GDP is expected to grow by 4.5 % to \$6.35bn (QAR23.1bn, or 1.7 % of GDP) by 2024 (WTTC 2014).

Qatar is endowed with numerous attractions and resources, including sand dunes, museums,

traditional souqs, beaches, sports venues, exhibition and conference facilities, as well as local Qatari and Arab culture (QTA 2014). These provide opportunities for the nation to leverage its socioeconomic transformation. As Qatar prepares to host the 2022 FIFA World Cup, the country is currently undergoing rapid change hand in hand with the country's tourism development.

Qatar Tourism Authority has launched its long-range ► [national tourism](#) strategy to make Qatar a premier ► [destination](#) (QTA 2014). It has invested in infrastructure that will make the country attractive to international tourists. In 2013, 1.2 million arrivals were recorded. This figure is expected to increase to seven million by 2030 (QTA 2013). Business tourists, visiting friends and relatives, and “authentic discoverers” are the main targeted segments.

The key challenge is how to overcome the lack of brand identity and inadequate supply of tourism ► [education](#) institutions. There is only one university in the country offering tourism and ► [hospitality](#) education at an undergraduate level. This limitation has led to the number of qualified human resources within Qatar to remain low, thus leading to overdependence on expert labor force (QTA 2014). Qatar's commitment to becoming a knowledge-based economy, by encouraging quality research, is an important strategic move toward overcoming the current challenges facing its tourism and hospitality industry, and other sectors.

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Figure 1 Map of Qatar



See also ► [Desert tourism](#), ► [destination branding](#), ► [Middle East](#), ► [sports tourism](#).

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