

Doha dreaming

Qatar's booming metropolis is fast becoming one of the world's most engaging cities. **Emily Handford** discovers the best places to stay, dine and explore

Beginning life as an inconspicuous fishing village on the eastern coast of the Qatar peninsula, Doha has in recent years been transforming itself to become one of the world's leading economic powerhouses.

Much of the country's wealth can be attributed to its oil and natural gas reserves, and leading energy companies including Qatar Petroleum, Qatargas and RasGas house their headquarters in the capital. However, in recent times Doha has diversified its economy

to become a vital hub for culture, commerce and education, offering first-rate artistic institutions and educational centres, as well as a booming tourist industry.

Coupled with its successful bid for hosting the 2022 FIFA world cup – the first Arab country to do so – and Qatar is well on its way to becoming a major world player.

WHERE TO STAY

The prestigious West Bay district is home to numerous upscale hotels,

including the W Hotel. A modern sanctuary sitting above the city, it boasts 442 vividly decorated rooms and suites that peer over the blue Arabian Gulf. With easy access to some of the best culinary, shopping and nightlife experiences as well as playing host to its own three fabulous bars and lounges, guests will never be short of things to do while staying here.

Also located in the West Bay complex is the Four Seasons, Doha. Offering 17 storeys of modern luxury the hotel is a haven for business travellers with its comprehensive business facilities, seven restaurants and lounges and three-storey Spa and Wellness centre – ideal for executives in need of some downtime.

Meanwhile, for a hotel stay with a difference, visitors should try The Torch hotel in Doha's Sports city, Aspire Zone. At an astounding 300 meters high and with 360-degree panoramic views across the city it is the tallest hotel



in Qatar. Spread across 51 floors, each room and suite features unique iPad in-room technology, mood lighting as well as the latest interactive LED TVs.

W Hotel Doha

www.wholedoha.com/

Four Seasons, Doha

www.fourseasons.com/doha/

The Torch Hotel

www.torchdoha.com

DINNER & DRINKS

For refined dining in the utmost style head to the unlikely destination of the Museum of Islamic Art for Mediterranean cuisine from Michelin starred chef Alain Ducasse. His first restaurant in West Asia, guests can expect outstanding French dishes – with influences from the Middle East – including; tender octopus, marinated bonito from the Arabian Gulf and foie gras with truffles.

Meanwhile, over at Doha's West Bay is W Hotel's Spice Market restaurant, which offers signature South Asian cuisine in a warm, exotic ambiance. Guests will feel as though they have been transported to a Vietnamese or Thai street market as they share dishes under a cluster of stylish lanterns.

While those looking for an after-dinner tittle should head to the Marriott's Glo Cocktail bar, where mouth-watering cocktails and delicious tapas-style nibbles are commonplace. Visit at the weekend when resident DJs and music artists play to really let your hair down.

Idam

www.alain-ducasse.com/en/restaurant/idam

Spice Market

www.spicemarketdoha.com

Glo Cocktail Bar

www.marriott.com



EXPLORE

A great place to explore Doha's history is at its several art museums and galleries, a must-visit being the renowned Museum of Islamic Art. Designed by architect IM Pei – best known for designing Paris' Louvre – the museum stands out as an architectural gem. Home to ancient Islamic artefacts including ceramics, metalwork and rare Arabic manuscripts dating back to the 7th century, it is a great place to learn more about Islamic culture. While fans of contemporary art should head to Mathaf – the Arab museum of Modern Art, where there is a permanent collection curated to offer a uniquely Arab perspective on modern art.

Afterwards, join the hustle and bustle of the city and head to Doha's original marketplace Souq Waqif for an endless selection of

lakes, giant cacti and numerous imposing limestone rock formations – designed to test even the most seasoned professionals. ■

Museum of Islamic Art

www.mia.org.qa

Villaggio Mall

www.villaggioqatar.com

Doha Golf Club

www.dohagolfclub.com

Far left: The Four Seasons, Doha is a luxurious haven for business travellers

Middle: Enjoy authentic South-Asian cuisine at the Spice Market and find dazzling wares at the Souq Waqif (below)

Left: Doha's rising skyline

Main: The Museum of Islamic Art stands out as an architectural gem

spices, intricately woven textiles and unique handicrafts. Alternatively the city is home to an array of impressive malls, the Villaggio mall in particular offers over 200 designer outlets housed within an elaborately designed Italianate-themed mall, complete with a 150-metre canal with gondolas that ensure it is a shopping experience not to forget.

Further afield golfers will be in their element at the Doha Golf Club. One of the first grass golf courses to be built in the Middle East, this 18-hole, par 72 Championship course offers a challenging round thanks to its strategically positioned

