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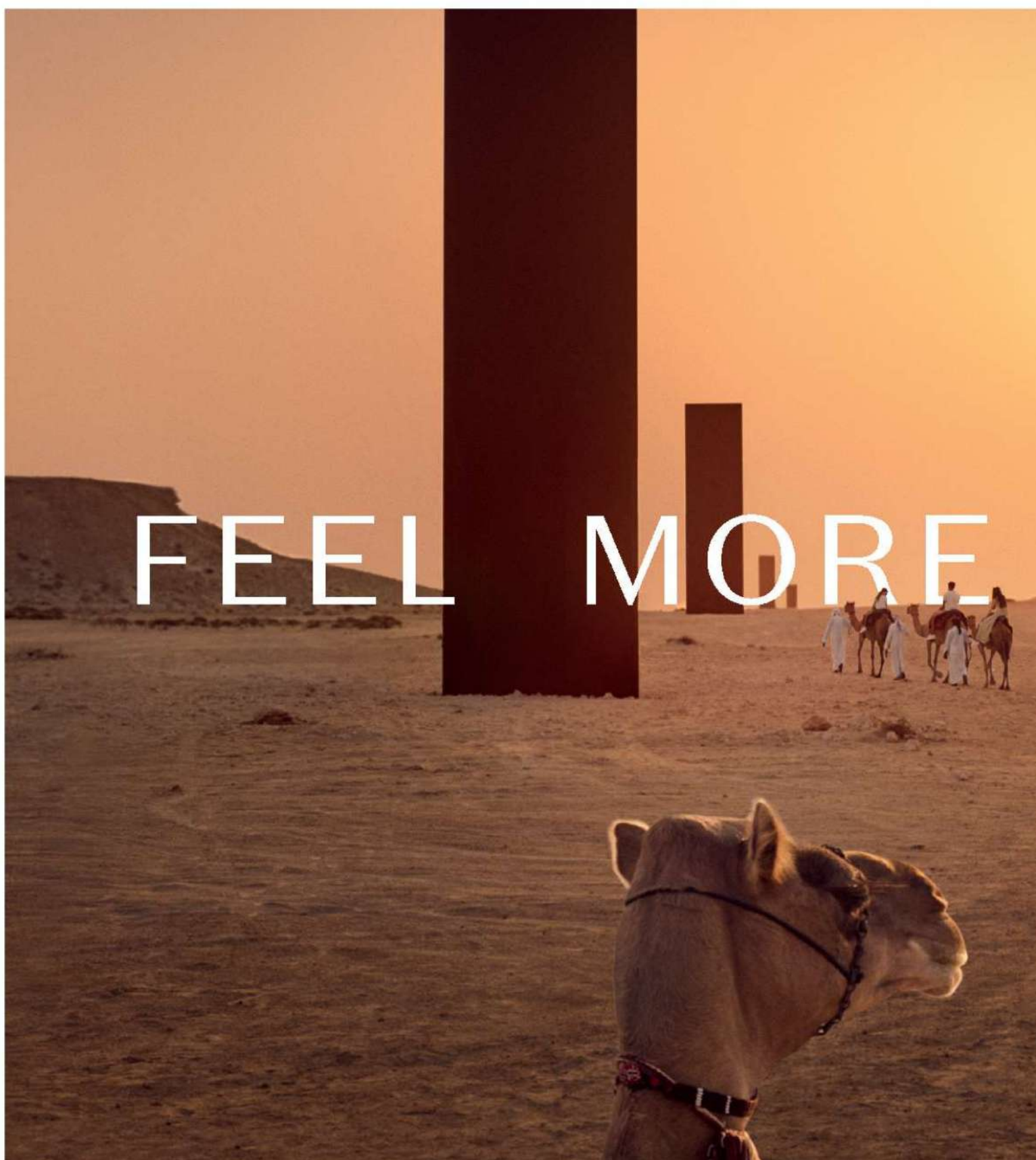
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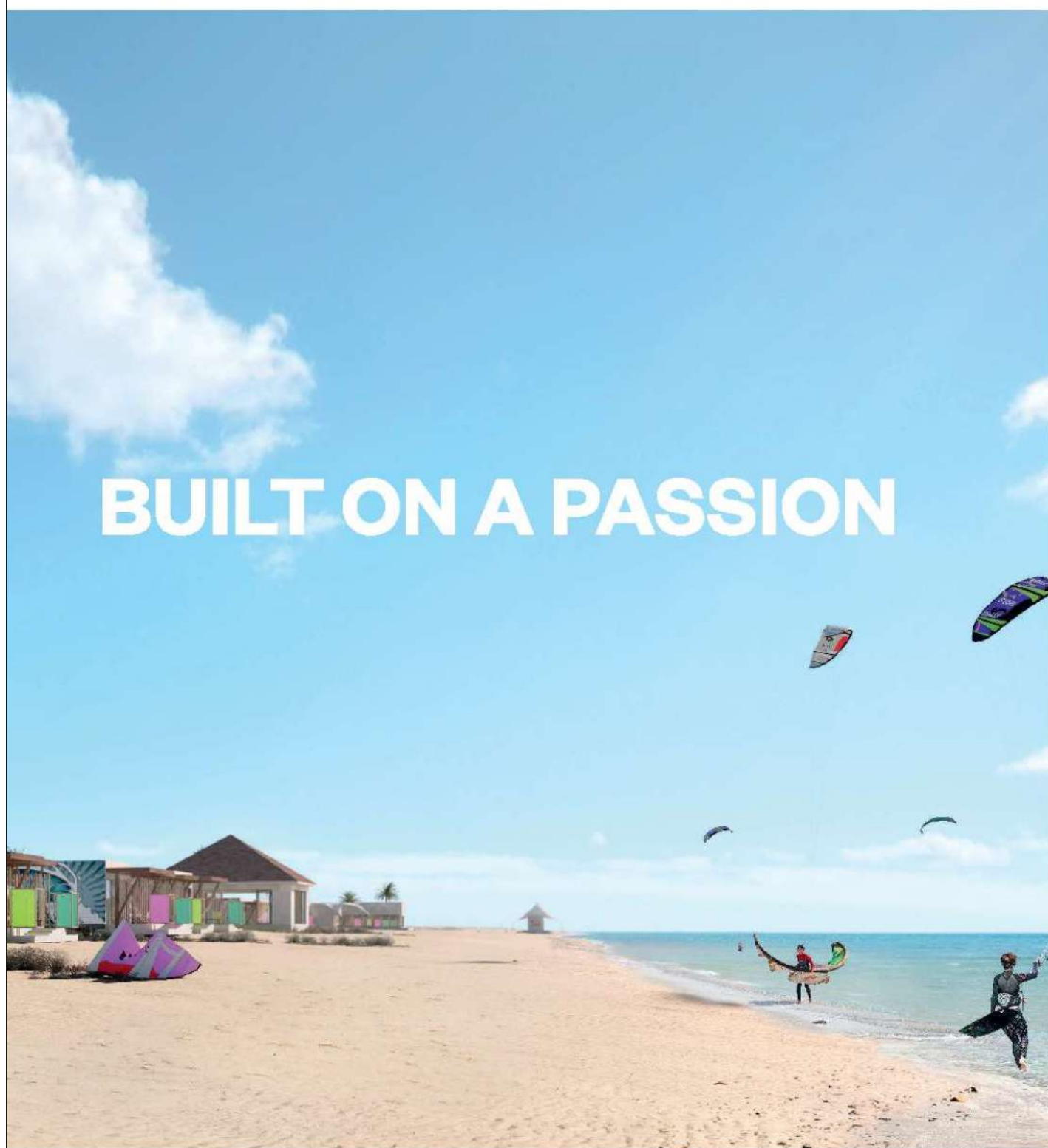
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An ambitious artwork located deep in the desert is well worth the trip

ON THE COVER: The National Museum of Qatar photographed by Jack Johns

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PHOTOGRAPHS: JACK JOHNS; TOM PARKER

EDITOR'S LETTER



ASK ME ABOUT CRICKET. As someone who's spent the majority of her life in India, football is not a sport I claim to understand. So truthfully, much of the excitement around the FIFA World Cup passed me by. Doha, too, felt like a destination one knew primarily from its airport, a mandatory stopover while flying the excellent Qatar Airways. Yet that's all changed in recent years. Every few months, there seemed to be some unusual and exciting news coming out

of Qatar – a Jean Nouvel structure, a museum, a fantastic hotel, a slow but significant amassing of international art, headed by a woman from the royal family who spoke articulately about her vision.

As a travel journalist, I've learnt that truly knowing a place requires much more than just visiting it – you have to arrive with an open mind and heart, and be willing to cast away the perceptions you've built over time. When I finally got to Qatar, the first place I headed to was Zulal, a new wellness destination managed by Thailand-based Chiva-Som, set on a shallow beach at the northernmost tip of the country where you can see flamingoes and mangroves. What I actually found there was an embodiment of what the nation seems to be doing as a whole. The resort brings together cutting-edge wellness facilities and ancient practices – including Traditional Chinese Medicine and Ayurveda – but it has also gone back to the writings of the physician-philosopher-astronomer Ibn Sina, who wrote *The Canon of Medicine* during the Islamic Golden Age. It has found similarities of thought and threads to develop what it now calls TAIM (Traditional Arabic and Islamic Medicine). This

willingness to allow in foreign expertise and philosophies – and to reclaim and revisit its own past with a fresh perspective – marks an important moment in the region, one I can get behind and celebrate. There is both an authenticity to Qatar and an openness to the outside world; it presents a different idea of progress. It is complicated, imperfect, fraught with challenges and missteps – just like everywhere else. It is easier to box Qatar into a simple narrative – perhaps a romantic tale of nomadic Bedouins in the desert, or one of shiny buildings and extraordinary wealth and a determination to make a splash on the world stage. The truth is really somewhere in-between. And there, as we know, is always where the fun is.

Our *Qatar Special* – a unique collaboration between our editors across the UK, USA and India – has been brought to life by an exceptional team and our network of trusted correspondents, as well as new, local voices to make sure Qataris have the opportunity to tell their own stories. When reading the words of Priya D'Souza, I yearned to wander Doha's Souq Waqif. I eventually did, until close to midnight, snacking on a cheese-and-egg-filled pancake dusted with zaatar, made by a female Egyptian street-food vendor. Ulrike Lemmin-Woolfrey's feature on the country's creatives fills me with so much enthusiasm for the future – women such as textile artist Maryam Al-Homaid are at the forefront, helping us to understand the place of Islamic traditions in the contemporary world. Boundaries everywhere are being pushed. Juggling the past and future is a delicate skill, but we are privileged to be able to watch it unfold here, to bear witness to a time that will undoubtedly be remarked upon as momentous. I hope you find within these pages stories that speak to you, fascinate you, and pull you into a place so few of us have visited. The World Cup might be coming to a close, but there are still thousands of those stories calling.

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CONTRIBUTORS

OUR SEASONED TRAVELLERS AND LOCALS REVEAL THEIR TOP TIPS AND HIGHLIGHTS FROM QATAR

PRIYA D'SOUZA

Writer, *Trade Secrets* (p68)

Can you recommend a go-to souvenir for visitors?

'USUALLY IT'S IRANIAN GAZ, A KIND OF NOUGAT THAT CAN BE BOUGHT IN SOUQ WAQIF. IF THEY DON'T HAVE A SWEET TOOTH, THEN SOME SADU TEXTILES.'



ANDREW URWIN

Photographer, *The Taste Makers* (p78)

What was your best experience?
'The friendliness and openness of the people. Many of them offered to open up their homes and share a family meal with me. And I recommend buying a jar of machboos spice mix from Desert Rose Café, so you can take some of the flavours home.'



PRASAD RAMAMURTHY

Writer, *In the Pink* (p35)

Describe the most memorable thing about your visit?
'The Inland Sea. First of all, it was simply magical to drive through the dunes and arrive at a spot where the sea was surrounded by the sand. Then my guide pointed out a pink line of flamingos feeding in the water. At that moment, I felt stupid for not having packed my binoculars.'

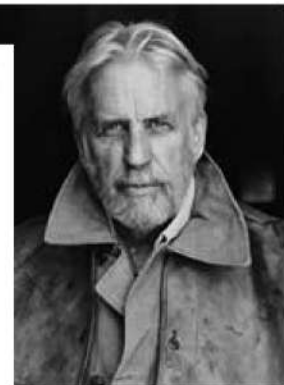


STANLEY STEWART

Writer, *Flying High* (p16)

What film or book would you like to see set in Qatar?

'A REMAKE OF THE 1921 SILENT FILM "THE SHEIK" STARRING RUDOLPH VALENTINO.'



ANA LUI

Photographer, *In the Pink* (p35)

Tell us about your most unexpected discovery?

'DESPITE THE MODERN INFRASTRUCTURE AND FUTURISTIC ARCHITECTURE, IT FEELS LIKE A DESERT FULL OF WONDERFUL HERITAGE AND OUT-OF-THIS-WORLD HOSPITALITY.'



RACHEL MORRIS

Writer, *The Taste Makers* (p78)

Where's your favourite getaway spot outside Doha?

'At Al Ruwais, on the northern tip of the country at the edge of the sea, is the very stylish Arsan Café. The building used to be a police station. It's the perfect pit stop and a great place to catch the sunset.'



NASSER AL-NAAMA

Writer, *Hit the Right Notes* (p23)

What film or book would you like to see set in Qatar?

'Given how glitzy and full of glass towers Doha is today, I wonder what it would be like to set a futuristic sci-fi film such as *Dune* here.'



JACK JOHNS

Photographer, *Creative by Nature* (p58)

Did you make any surprising discoveries?

'THE AMOUNT OF DIVERSE ART DOTTED ABOUT DOHA, FROM DAMIEN HIRSTS TO BEAUTIFUL MURALS BY LOCAL ARTISTS.'



NICOLA CHILTON

Writer, *Root and Branch* (p46)

Can you share a highlight of your trip?

'Driving out solo to see Richard Serra's East-West/West-East sculpture in the desert was a real adventure that involved me trusting GPS up to a point, and ultimately my own instincts. Nothing can prepare you for seeing the sculptures rising out of the desert landscape. They're hauntingly beautiful.'

TOM PARKER

Photographer, *Trade Secrets* (p68)

What surprised you most?

'Old Qatar was much more prevalent than new Qatar. Everyone in Doha says Souq Waqif is the city's beating heart. It was rebuilt but feels authentic – and I loved Shujaa, which served mountains of barbecued kebabs, salads and fresh breads.'



ULRIKE LEMMIN-WOOLFREY

Writer, *Creative by Nature* (p58)


As a local, what's your advice to visitors?

'LEAVE YOUR PREJUDICES BEHIND AND JUST COME AND HAVE A LOOK. I PROMISE YOU WILL BE PLEASANTLY SURPRISED.'

PHOTOGRAPHS: ASHRAF KHUNDUQUJI; ALISTAIR TAYLOR-YOUNG

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INNOVATOR Q&A

FIRST PERSON SINGULAR

HER EXCELLENCY SHEIKHA AL MAYASSA LEADS ON QATAR'S CUTTING-EDGE CULTURAL MANIFESTO



YOU'RE CREDITED AS THE DRIVING FORCE THAT TRANSFORMED QATAR INTO A VAST MUSEUM AND ART GALLERY. WHAT LED TO THIS?

'In 1997 the decision was made to focus on education and culture as the two sectors [through which] to diversify our economy and invest in our human resources. To create an ecosystem it is necessary to encompass all aspects of life. The creative industries are a significant factor in developing a sustainable economy for Qatar. Creative thinkers are the most sought-after people, as they are able to think outside the box and find solutions to all sorts of problems. Engaging in creativity allows you to be better at what you do. If you study the urban landscape of Qatar, you will realise that public art has always been part of our life. His Highness The Father Amir asked that Hamad International Airport include major art commissions to welcome our visitors with a creative spirit. His Highness The Amir directed the Doha Central Development and

Beautification Project, which continues to expand the vision of art in public places and engage people in a creative way. Today we have commissioned local artists to establish outstanding art throughout our country.'

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE THINGS LEARNED THROUGH THIS PROCESS AND HOW ARE YOU CONTINUING TO ENSURE THE GROWTH OF THIS CREATIVE ECONOMY?

'Our developments establish a clear long-term vision rooted in authenticity. Our plans are modified as we review and redevelop our goals based on the Qatar National Vision 2030 and beyond. The ecosystem continues to grow, as does our talent pool. Today there are regional grants for fashion through the non-profit initiative Fashion Trust Arabia, and financing for cinema with the Doha Film Institute. We also have residencies for design, technology and fashion through the Fire Station, M7 and Liwan studios. Anyone can apply so long as they are resident here. Apart

from being a cultural hub, we are also a centre for sporting events and have facilities to encourage an active lifestyle.'

IS THERE AN INITIATIVE THAT YOU'RE PARTICULARLY FOND OF?

'I'm very excited about our design hub, Liwan, because of the way it repurposes a beloved historic site in Doha as a space for today's creativity, and also for tomorrow. We have developed it in the mid-century courtyard building where the late Amna Mahmoud Al Jaidah established the first all-girls primary school in Qatar. Think of the spirit of enterprise, innovation and hope that suffuses this building. Reimagined as Liwan, the site is a studio and lab for local designers, especially emerging talents who are in the earliest stages of establishing their careers. They are working alongside artists and designers from around the world – formulating cultural strategies of implementation for future projects.'

As told to Ulrike Lemmin-Woolfrey

PHOTOGRAPH: HARRY CORY WRIGHT

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FIRST IMPRESSIONS



PHOTOGRAPHS: JACK JOHNS

A full-page photograph of a falcon with a distinctive blue patch on its wing, perched on a person's gloved hand. The background is a soft, hazy sunset sky. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

FLYING HIGH

THE OLD WAYS OF LIFE ENDURE DESPITE
QATAR'S STELLAR EMERGENCE INTO
MODERNITY. STANLEY STEWART IS AWED
BY THIS BALANCE OF PAST AND PRESENT

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

AT AL JUMAIL, THE ABANDONED VILLAGE on Qatar's bleak north coast, you forget for a moment the constellation of skyscrapers across West Bay in Doha. I stood on an empty salt-rimmed shore of splintered rock. The sea was flat and pale as old porcelain. A single blighted tree stood knee-deep in the incoming tide. Sea winds blew sand through the courtyard of the ruined mosque while the vacant windows of the houses stared out across the Gulf, like old people gazing into the middle distance, trying to remember something.

I thought of Al Jumail as a memorial: to the long centuries, to the perseverance of the people of the Qatari coast, before oil transformed this small country. Here was Qatar in the before times: a simple village on a low coast, brave men going to sea in their dhows, hoisting lateen sails, looking back at the diminishing figures of loved ones on the shore. They were away for months at a time. It was long tradition here; Pliny the Elder in the first century AD claimed the pearl fisheries of the area were the most productive in the world. For two millennia the precious gems sustained humble places such as Al Jumail. Until the early 1900s, when the Japanese mastered the art of pearl cultivation and dhows were hauled ashore and abandoned, and livelihoods in villages like this shuddered to an abrupt halt.

If Qatar feels like a fairy tale, a Cinderella transformed by a stroke of luck, or the will of Allah, then this moment, when the pearling ended, was its darkest hour. But as with all good tales, a sudden twist sparked a happy ending. In 1939 oil was discovered and the nation began to stride into a brave new world. Today this small country, sticking out into the Gulf like a thumb, consistently ranks near the top of the list of nations with the highest GDP per capita, alongside Luxembourg and Singapore, and its capital is one of the world's most dazzling cities.

But for all Doha's bright lights and gleaming skyscrapers, this city is an eminently serious place, and its new-found wealth is being handled with mature consideration. When I asked an expat if she would ever think of leaving, she shook her head firmly. Impossible, she said, the quality of life is unrivalled. She wasn't thinking of beach resorts or kitesurfing or five-star hotels – though of course these all exist here. She was thinking of employment opportunities, medical facilities and world-class education (six top American universities have satellite campuses in Doha). The capital is a vibrant cultural hub that has an opera house, a film institute, a state-of-the-art library and a slew of world-class museums and galleries that would turn heads in any global metropolis. The fact it is also home to Al Jazeera, a beacon of broadcasting professionalism in the Arab world and beyond, says much about its aspirations.

Perhaps there is an echo of Renaissance Italy – when the patronage of new wealth opened up incredible opportunities to artists – in the country's many cultural achievements. At Aspire Park, Qatar's largest such green space, is English artist Sarah Lucas's *Perceval*, a life-sized sculpture of a shire horse in cement and bronze – her only piece of public art anywhere in the world. When I was in town, there was a large Jeff Koons retrospective at Al Riwaq, while at Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art, an emotive exhibition by French-Algerian artist Kader Attia explored themes of post-colonial trauma. This mix of Arab and international perspectives is typical of Qatar.

But it is really architecture that is Doha's greatest art form, that marks it out as special. It is a tribute to its urban planners that such exemplary buildings are part of the city's rollercoaster of construction. All over town are contemporary architectural masterpieces.



Clockwise from this picture: dhow in the Corniche marina; Katara Cultural Village; camel rider; mosque at Al Jumail. *Previous pages, from left:* West Bay; falcon at Katara Cultural Village





Start with the spectacular National Museum of Qatar, a cascade of curving cantilevered discs designed by French architect Jean Nouvel; on its opening in 2019, *Time* named it one of the world's greatest places to visit. In the harbour, on a man-made island, is the Museum of Islamic Art by IM Pei, famous for the Louvre Pyramid. A postmodern take on an Arabian fortress, it contains one of the world's largest collections of Islamic art, from three continents. Hop in an Uber and head to the Qatar National Library, conceived by Rem Koolhaas, a literary temple containing more than one million books, some dating back to the 15th century. Eight football stadiums were also built for the World Cup, including a pleated, sail-like structure designed by Zaha Hadid's architectural firm.

A WEEK IN QATAR LEFT ME WITH vivid impressions. Somewhere within the labyrinthine alleys of Doha's Souq Waqif, among the scimitars and gold and headpieces, a shopkeeper showed me sacks of frankincense – always a cool gift for a newborn – which people burn to banish djinns or bad spirits. In a clubby coffee house devoted to the traditional game of dama (a complex form of draughts), two elderly players interrupted their match to show me the rudiments of its strategy. In the desert at Al-Shahaniya, I watched the trainers exercising teams of racing camels which emerged from the early-morning haze like caparisoned caravans. In the Msheireb Museums, set in four traditional courtyard houses, I was pleased to see an exhibition on slavery which tackled the issue, historical and contemporary, in an open and forthright manner.

Strolling the pedestrian terraces of The Pearl, an island of luxury apartments in a yacht-filled harbour, I browsed smart boutiques before dithering over a choice of international restaurants for dinner. Later, on an empty beach between sensual dunes and a glittering ocean, I watched a crescent moon rise over the Gulf. In Katara Cultural Village I meandered between art galleries as a Mozart clarinet concerto filled the air from the amphitheatre. At Baladna farm, where irrigation has made the desert bloom, I bought organic food at the shop then lunched from a farm-to-table menu; afterwards, on Doha's waterfront promenade the Corniche, I gazed across West Bay at shining skyscrapers, like futuristic lighthouses on this coast.

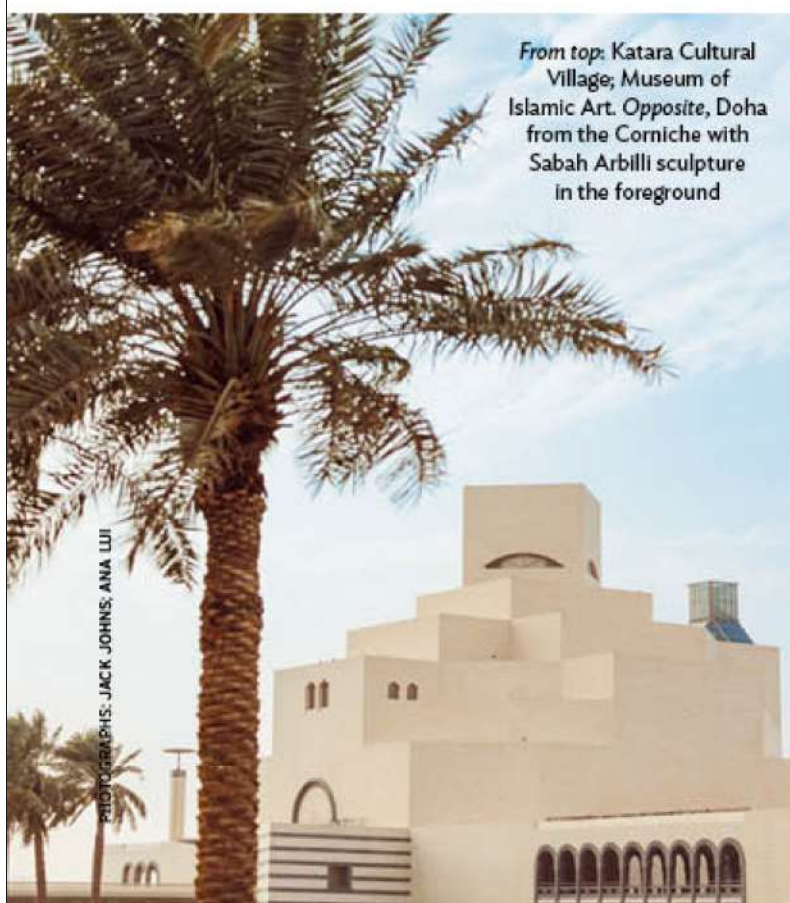
Pearl diving, whilst still integral to the culture, is now more of a hobby than the lifeblood of the economy. These days, the dhows that once sailed constantly to Mumbai and Zanzibar more often whisk visitors on cruises off the coast. Bedouin culture, and its world of deserts and tents, remains a part of modern-day Qatar, too. This is not ancient history; grandparents of many Qataris still remember those nomadic days. Peel away the urban veneer and you find a society in which some have deep roots in desert traditions of hospitality and respect.

At Souq Al Wakrah, about 12 miles south of Doha, I met Um Saeed, a regal matriarchal figure and proud Bedouin woman who has kept the weaving traditions of her mother and grandmother alive. Bedouin weaving (known as al sadu or sadu) is done on a ground loom, with the bands, just 24 inches wide, sewn together to create larger panels. A gazelle horn is used to tighten the cloth after the weft is passed. Colours are rich and earthy and the patterns, woven from memory, adhere to the splendid geometric abstractions of the greatest Islamic art.

'Weaving is key to Bedouin life,' Um Saeed said. 'It is part of who we are.' When I asked about the allure of nomadic existence, she spoke of the freedom of the desert, the sense of space and movement, free from the confinements of cities. Women, she said, are central to Bedouin life, creating and erecting the tents and overseeing livestock. ➤



PEEL AWAY THE URBAN
VENEER AND FIND A SOCIETY
IN WHICH SOME HAVE DEEP
ROOTS IN DESERT TRADITIONS
OF HOSPITALITY AND RESPECT



From top: Katara Cultural Village; Museum of Islamic Art. Opposite, Doha from the Corniche with Sabah Arbilli sculpture in the foreground

PHOTOGRAPHS: JACK JOHNS, ANA LUI

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Coffee, of course, is also key to Arab culture. The drink is said to have originated when a goat herder, in some distant past, noticed the energising effect the wild beans had on his animals. Always made personally by your host, it is central to the hospitality of a nomadic tent. The beans are ground in the presence of guests, often with the addition of cloves. It is then boiled and poured into the brass dallah, or coffee pot. Flavoured with saffron and ground cardamom, the result is a mild, pale drink, served in tiny cups. Now recognised by UNESCO as an Intangible Cultural Heritage, the whole ceremony is heavy with meaning. Guests should drink it as soon as it is handed to them. If you put your cup down before drinking, it is a sign you have come with important matters to discuss: marriage, or a tribal difficulty, or perhaps just a couple of lost camels.

To reconnect to these traditions, Doha's inhabitants love nothing more than getting away for a few days into the desert – except nowadays they travel with generators and four-wheel drives. These may not have quite the romance of the traditional black goat-hair tents, but the impulse is exactly the same, this affinity with the elemental beauty of desert landscapes. To truly understand the soul of the country, visitors should follow their example and head out of the city into this land of limitless horizons.

One afternoon I joined Faisal Abdulla Al-Naimi, director of the archaeology department at Qatar Museums, to visit his friend, Salman Mohammed Al-Ameri, deep in the desert beyond Doha. We drove south through a landscape that seemed to unfold long limbs towards vast reaches of sky. Salman's camp, a cluster of tents and camels, was a small island in a gravel-and-sand sea.

I was welcomed with all the traditional hospitality of the desert; coffee and plates of delicious dates, the staple of Bedouin life, their plump flesh soft as jelly. In the carpeted tent we reclined like sultans as the next course was prepared – glasses of sweet tea and a plate of cakes. A fire glowed in a grate while water cooled in a tall earthenware jug. For a time we talked of the astonishing prehistoric heritage of Qatar, the rock art and petroglyphs, flint tools and pottery, tombs containing swords and camel skeletons. According to Faisal, the earliest sites in Qatar date back to 6600 BC, an era when the region enjoyed a humid climate and lush vegetation.

But inevitably talk soon turned to the twin Qatari passions: camels and falcons. Faisal participated every year in hunting competitions which involved spending three days in the desert, riding camels and hunting gazelles and houbara bustards with falcons. These latter birds are a particular obsession, adored almost like cherished family members, and their owners' concern for them is impressive. In the souq in Doha, I had sought out the traditional arcades where birds, hooded like condemned prisoners, were perched on railings under the knowledgeable eyes of traders and keepers who sipped tea and discussed the finer points of these feathered icons. Not far away was a falcon hospital where injured birds were pampered patients. 'The hunting is part of the old life,' Faisal said nostalgically. 'We love to retain our connection to it.'

In a region whose fortunes have been transformed so fast and so radically, the camels, the falconry, the hospitality of the nomadic tent, those strange and splendid desert landscapes are all still part of Qatari identity, an anchor amid dramatic change. 📍

Discover Qatar organises tours (discoverqatar.qa). *Embrace Doha* arranges cultural experiences across Qatar (embracedoha.com)



THE OUTPOST

AL BARARI

QATAR

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WORD OF MOUTH

THE PEOPLE, PLACES AND HAPPENINGS ON OUR RADAR

DANA AL FARDAN

The singer-songwriter reveals her inspirations and why it's vital to keep Qatari musical traditions alive

For much of the 20th century Qatar was a wilderness, the glistening Doha metropolis a glint in nobody's eye. People eked out a living herding camels in winter and pearl diving in summer. As they dived they chanted to a beat: fjiri – the music of the sea. 'It is made by a yhela, or vase-shaped drum,' says Dana Al Fardan, Qatar's first contemporary female composer and singer-songwriter. 'Alongside is often the rababa, a coconut shell with two strings, which emits a loud warble. The chanting recalls a Portuguese fado, or a flamenco wail.'

Dana (or Danah) means 'the most perfectly sized, valuable and beautiful pearl' in Arabic; as she's worked tirelessly to transform this music born from the rituals of pearl diving into a modern tradition, it's apt this name should fall to her. Fjiri's first phase was farewell: 'They left their families to go on a six-month expedition to source pearls.' Their lives depended on these journeys and the call of freedom pervades the fjiri. These are plaintive, bluesy songs of sorrow, alienation and deep longing.

Al Fardan's musical interests were sparked by chance. She hung around the tennis circuit as a teenager. 'The pianist at the tennis club didn't have much to do, so he taught me chords,' she says. 'I'd carry on at home on a tiny electric keyboard.'

Since then, she has exported Qatari music across the world, including lewya and ardha, the ceremonial music that accompanies sword dancing. As cultural ambassador for the Qatar Philharmonic Orchestra, she can even be heard on Qatar ➤

PHOTOGRAPH: TOM PARKER



HIT THE RIGHT NOTES

THE MOVERS AND SHAKERS TAKING QATAR'S CULTURE TO THE WORLD

WORD OF MOUTH

➤ Airways flights. Al Fardan blends neoclassical influences and musical theatre to create contemporary Arabic classical music. Her albums include her 2013 debut *Paint* and the orchestral collection *Sandstorm*. She has also co-written two musicals: *Broken Wings*, based on the novel by Lebanese poet Kahlil Gibran, and *Rumi*, a reflection on the 13th-century Persian poet and philosopher. Was it shocking to be the country's first female singer-songwriter? 'In the sense of it being a first, yes,' she says, 'There was no backlash but I had to construct my own narrative. There have been so many firsts in recent years though. Last year, Sheikha Asma became the first Qatari woman to summit Everest and creativity is everywhere.' The pace of change here is such that these songs hark back to a time that is not too distant. 'But their preservation is so needed,' says Al Fardan, 'not just because of the pace of change but the intellectualisation of our culture, and its growing synonymousness with Western civilisation.' Al Fardan remembers Doha before its great ambitions were realised. 'It is nothing like when I was a child,' she says, when an exciting outing was to the new Pizza Hut and frozen yogurt was the height of sophistication. 'Pizza Hut Super Supreme is still my favourite pizza,' she says. When Qatar discovered gas it became quickly upwardly mobile. A further epic shift came in 1995, when Crown Prince Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani took power and ushered in a modern, progressive state. 'As we modernise, if we don't go back and take pieces from our heritage, we will lose something. We are a young nation, building our sense of who we are. My mandate is to seek what defines our Middle Eastern culture more broadly and bring it back into our consciousness. We cannot just regurgitate what is happening elsewhere. We are Gulf Arabs.' LYDIA BELL

AL FARDAN'S QATAR WEEKEND

'Visit the **Museum of Islamic Art**, which offers not a theological but a geographical and cultural reference point, and tells a cultural story that spans everything from the Silk Road to the Ottoman Empire.'

'Go to the great desert camps where the dunes meet the ocean, such as **Sealine**, or **Al Majles Resort** on the Inland Sea. Qataris love a barbecue by the sea when the weather is nice, and the water is beautiful.'

'To eat Qatari food at its best, try **Rosado** in The Pearl quarter, where female chef Noor Al Mazroei is marrying local cuisine with a fine-dining experience.'

KHALIFA AL HAROON

Al Haroon launched iloveqatar.net in 2008 to create connections between expats and Qataris. Since then the website has consolidated its position as the primary source of news and information on a wide range of topics, including city events, gallery openings, restaurant launches and kids' activities. When he started ILQ his aim was to use its content to help people realise they have a lot more in common than they think, and that manifesto has extended into a number of other ventures such as Raqami TV, among the fastest-growing Arabic tech channels on YouTube, which creates employment in troubled areas such as the Gaza Strip; gaming-distribution company Store974, and The Social Studio, which brings regional and international music and comedy to the country's stages.

What's your take on social media and the digital scene here? 'Definitely during the pandemic it's proven to be a great way to connect with people. I see such amazing content online and a number of apps are extremely useful: Qatar Events for the coolest local gigs, Snoonu and Talabat for ordering in food. The metro is very convenient for travel and the Qatar Rail app is perfect for navigating metro and tram services, plus you can buy and top up cards online. Then there are our Uber-equivalent apps – Careem and Karwa will get you around in a click.'

What would you recommend as a must-see spot here? 'Definitely Souq Waqif because you get a sense of what the country used to be like. It's a great place to just people-watch and I love getting lost in the maze of shops. Don't just stick to the main street – you'll find some awesome buys in places tucked away in the alleyways. It's also right across the street from Msheireb Downtown Doha, one of the world's smartest and most sustainably built developments. Between the two, you get to enjoy the past and the future of Qatar.' MOHANA RAJAKUMAR





BOUTHAYNA AL MUFTAH

Known for her abstract, monochrome art that incorporates print-making, typography and documentation, Al Muftah, a graduate of Virginia Commonwealth University School of the Arts in Qatar (VCUarts Qatar), chose fountain pens over computers in school and was inspired by calligraphy and Chinese ink painting. Her practice evolved into photography and ink on paper, influenced by artists such as Jackson Pollock, Charles Rennie Mackintosh, Fathi Hassan and Mona Hatoum. Her work is in the National Museum's permanent collection and has been shown in Dubai, Berlin and the USA.

How does your heritage factor into your artistic expression?
 'My heritage, memories and experiences all are recurring subjects in the artwork I produce. Recording and communicating these are my way of archiving part of our cultural history that seems to be disintegrating as we progress into a modern way of life. Most of the concepts are inspired by stories, collective memories, objects and experiences that are deconstructed in a contemporary manner.'

Qatar has a lot of art in public spaces. If you had to create an itinerary, which pieces would make the cut? 'Richard Serra's 7 at the Museum of Islamic Art Park. And the art tour at Hamad International Airport is particularly enjoyable. Then there's Jean-Michel Othoniel's *Alfa*, 114 sculptures in the fountains at the National Museum, and Sabah Arbilli's calligraphic sculpture on the Corniche. I also recommend any remaining roundabouts from the old road structures. They are not considered art per se, but to me they were always such beautiful monuments, and have so much history associated with them.' NASSER AL-NAAMA

PHOTOGRAPH: TOM PARKER

HAMAD AL-AMARI

One of the country's leading stand-up comedians, Al-Amari deploys humour to help visitors and resident expats deepen their understanding of Qatari culture. He has opened for the likes of comedy favourites Trevor Noah and Gabriel Iglesias, and his jokes often revolve around observations of everyday life here in the Gulf nation. Other recurring themes include his experiences of growing up in Ireland (which explains his flawless Irish accent) and his love for Liverpool Football Club. He has been a fixture on the entertainment scene since 2011 and has become the go-to MC for events. He also co-hosts a popular online culture show called *QTips*.

Name a favourite Qatari activity? 'Karak. Drinking tea is the nation's favourite activity. Go to any karak outlet and you will definitely see Qataris enjoying their cup of milky tea.'

What's the one thing visitors should know about Qatar?
 'It's very safe. I can't see myself raising my kids anywhere else.'

What's an unmissable experience in Qatar? 'Spending a night in the desert. Visitors should book a camping service out in a place like Zekreet. There's nothing that equals experiencing the stillness of the Qatari desert under a starlit sky.' MR



WORD OF MOUTH



IBRAHIM MOHAMED JAIDAH

Jaidah is an expert on the nation's traditional architecture and has written several books – the most recent being *Qatari Style: Unexpected Interiors*. The practice he founded in Doha in 1966, Arab Engineering Bureau, has expanded to Oman and the Philippines and been recognised by the Aga Khan Foundation. The Al Thumama Stadium, a key venue of the 2022 FIFA World Cup, is an example of his vision, created in the shape of the ghafiya, a classic woven head cap. He's also co-founder of the Qatar Green Building Council and a sustainability advocate and educator at VCUarts Qatar and Qatar University.

You've designed one of the FIFA World Cup stadiums. How was that experience? 'It was an exciting moment for me, as an architect and a proud Qatari, to see our culture represented in the architecture of a stadium that the world's football fans came to use.'

What would you advise architecture enthusiasts to look out for when they visit Qatar? 'I really want to highlight the way that we have been able to preserve our identity even as we go through the process of building contemporary structures and expanding existing ones. You can see examples all over the country of the modern ways in which we've continued the use of courtyards, small windows and screens. All these elements play a role in the design of important new places – for example in the development of Msheireb Downtown Doha.'

And something you're excited to see coming up? 'The increase in cycling and pedestrian walkways shows how the country is changing and adapting to continue to foster wellbeing and growth. We also see landscaping projects where native plants are being used to further the focus on local and historical influences.' MR

MAHA AL-ANSARI

Being active has always been in the DNA of Al-Ansari, founder and CEO of Knockout Boxing. In 2011 she was part of the Qatari basketball team in the Pan Arab Games and in 2018 she set up Qatar's first female-only boxing studio. Trained as a journalist, she got hooked on boxing while interning at a New York sports magazine. Boxing, she says, boosts fitness, self-esteem and confidence, and she wants to empower Qatari women to get active and live a healthy lifestyle.

How would you describe the sporting scene in Qatar? 'It's definitely expanding. More and more locals are becoming interested in sports, which is a great thing. Boutique fitness studios offering boxing, spinning and HIIT workouts are popular. And nowadays padel (a cross between tennis and squash) has really been picking up – for the very first time this year, Qatar has a female team in an international tournament, which is awesome to see. Horsemanship is a key heritage element and horse riding is quite big here. We have world-class equine centres, such as Al Shaqab, which promote and preserve the legacy of the Arabian horse breed, and host top international events throughout the year.'

If you had to create a sporting itinerary, what would you include? 'There is so much to do and see. To start, I would include a visit to the Lusail Shooting Club, then a game of padel, kayaking in the Al Thakira mangroves and rock climbing at Aspire. Being in Doha means there's always some kind of activity you can do, no matter what your interests are. There's something for everyone.' NAN



PHOTOGRAPH: TOM PARKER

Fairmont
DOHA


RAFFLES
DOHA



Escape
to a **WORLD**
of **LUXURY**

Nestled in iconic towers built in tribute to Qatar's national emblem, Raffles and Fairmont Doha are where Qatar comes to life with personalised luxury and once-in-a-lifetime experiences.

WORD OF MOUTH

QATAR BALLOON FESTIVAL



WHALE SHARKS

ABOVE AND BEYOND

EXPLORING THE PLANNED CITY OF LUSAIL, NORTH OF DOHA, WHICH IS OFFERING A WHOLE NEW LEVEL OF LUXURY EXPERIENCES

MINI GUIDE: LUSAIL

STAY HERE

While **Katara Towers** – home to Raffles Doha and Fairmont Doha – is Lusail's definitive headline act, other accommodation options are also worth checking out. There's **Le Royal Méridien Doha**, one of three hotels within Place Vendôme, the country's largest shopping mall. Adjacent is a more intimate hotel from the **Autograph Collection**, overlooking the marina. Then there's the **Waldorf Astoria Lusail Doha**, 429 residences, suites and rooms – plus a water park, wave-rider pool and adventure trail. A larger theme park is next to the all-inclusive **Rixos Beach Resort**, Qetaifan Island North.

DO THIS

Shop at **Place Vendôme**, which has dozens of local and international labels including Louis Vuitton, Alexander McQueen, Hermès, Dior, YSL, Chopard and Patek Philippe. **Lusail Boulevard** is modelled on the Champs-Élysées, with a slew of stores and restaurants.

Families should make a beeline for **Meryal** on Qetaifan Island North. The theme park has 36 waterslides, including the 279ft Icon Tower. There will also be augmented-reality games for older kids. Inland is the **Lusail Circuit Sports Club**, where adults can get their kicks by skating and riding motorbikes – be sure to reserve in advance.

EAT AND DRINK

Michelin-feted chef David Myers' Franco-Italian restaurant **Adrift Anda** and **Loleya Café**, a Franco-Arabian patisserie by Qatari chef Aziz Al Qubaisi, are two of the winning choices at Le Royal Méridien Doha. For contemporary Italian, there's also **Alba** by Enrico Crippa, another Michelin master, at the Raffles Doha. If you want Indian, head for Fairmont Doha's **Masala Library**, or venture further east with **Sushisamba** at the Waldorf Astoria. The seafront **Lusail Night Market** offers a truly local experience, with a lively mix of Qatari, Arab and international fare.

BOOK NOW

WHALES AND SAILS

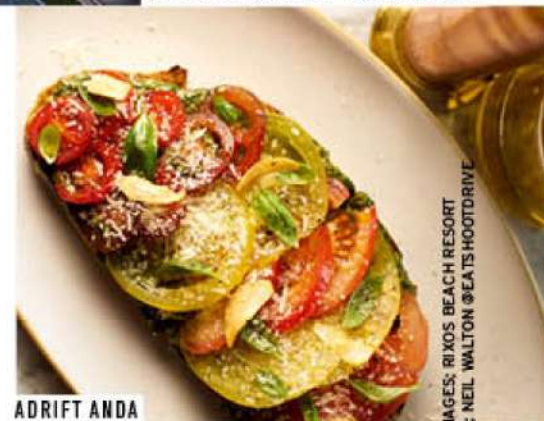
From April to September, the Gulf teems with fish that come to breed. The eggs attract shoals of whale sharks, so it's the best time to see this superb natural spectacle. The region was off limits to tourists, but now you can book a daily explorer catamaran with a whale shark expert through **Discover Qatar**. There are also cruises on the **Emerald Azzura** from Doha to Dubai, with stops at Abu Dhabi's Sir Bani Yas Island, Zighy Bay in Oman and Fujairah in the UAE.

TAKE TO THE SKIES

Every December, the sky above Doha's **Aspire Park** will be filled with dozens of colourful hot-air balloons, which gather from all over the world for the **Qatar Balloon Festival**. Visitors can climb onboard for unforgettable bird's-eye views of Doha, the sea and the desert beyond. As well as hot-air-balloon trips, **Regency Holidays** can arrange gyrocopter, paratrike and paragliding experiences right across the country. PRASAD RAMAMURTHY



SHOPS AT QETAIFAN ISLAND NORTH



ADRIFT ANDA



KATARA TOWERS

PHOTOGRAPHS: PAUL COWELL/EYEM/GETTY IMAGES; RIXOS BEACH RESORT RENDERING: SHAKEL SAFFEEK/GETTY IMAGES; NEIL WALTON @EATSHOOTDRIVE



WHALE SHARKS OF QATAR

The only way to get up and close to these majestic creatures in Qatar, home to one of the largest Whale Shark congregations on Earth. A natural global phenomenon not to be missed. Experience it all by Private Charter or adventurous Daily Explorer.

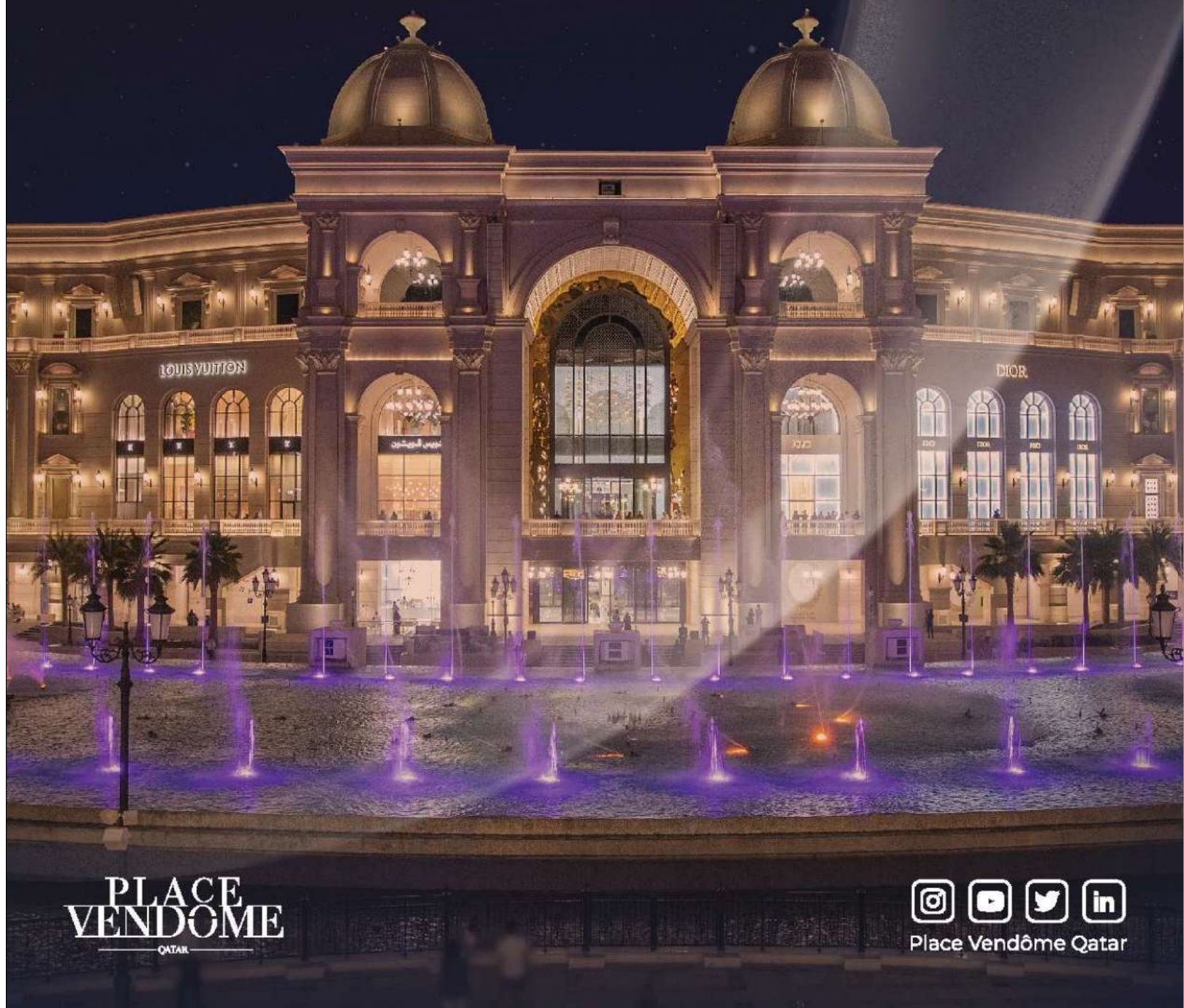
Limited spaces. Book now at whalesharksofqatar.com



A PARISIAN OASIS IN THE HEART OF QATAR

Explore a place inspired by the architecture of Paris and discover the ultimate destination for luxury, lifestyle and leisure. Place Vendôme features key hallmarks of Saint-Germain-des-Prés, Grand Palais and other iconic landmarks that bring a little slice of Paris to the heart of Qatar. Delivering a mix of up to 560 stores and a wide range of dining and coffee shops, Place Vendôme is the ultimate space to discover it all.

No matter what you're looking for, you'll find it all in Place Vendôme. See you there!



PLACE
VENDÔME
QATAR



Place Vendôme Qatar



SHOPPING IN

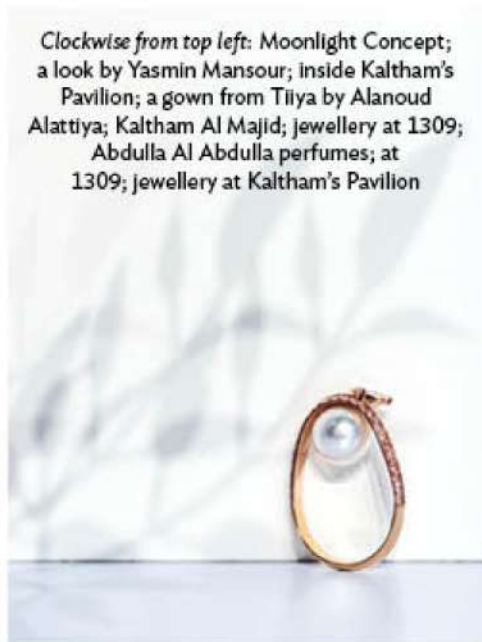
DOHA

QATARI FASHION DESIGNERS ARE PIVOTING BEYOND THE MIDDLE EAST
WITH A GLOBAL SENSIBILITY THAT'S STRIKING GOLD. BY SINDHU NAIR

PHOTOGRAPH: NICOLA CHILTON

Moonlight Concept,
Msheireb Downtown Doha

January/February 2023 Condé Nast Traveller Qatar Special 31



Clockwise from top left: Moonlight Concept; a look by Yasmin Mansour; inside Kaltham's Pavilion; a gown from Tiiya by Alanoud Alattiya; Kaltham Al Majid; jewellery at 1309; Abdulla Al Abdulla perfumes; at 1309; jewellery at Kaltham's Pavilion

GONE ARE THE DAYS WHEN a serious shopping trip meant flying to London or New York for the weekend. 'Qatar is evolving into a creative hub and is focused on letting the world see that we have great talent here that's rooted in tradition,' says designer and fashion consultant Sonali Raman, who previously showed her sustainable collection at New York Fashion Week. The fledgling fashion industry in Doha is carving out a unique space as designers create clothes, shoes, jewellery and perfumes, made here and exported across the Middle East and Europe. Here's our pick of the very best Qatar-based labels.

WOMENSWEAR

TIIYA

Qatar's first haute couture label, Tiiya is helmed by royal duo Shaikha Alanoud Alattiya – who started the brand inspired by childhood memories of her own mother's Dior gowns and artisan-made outfits – and her daughter Shaikha Shaikha Al-Thani. The collections take cultural storytelling as a starting point to create delicate works of art, with dresses handmade under the expert supervision of six master craftspeople, in elegant silhouettes using feathers, glasswork and gem-studded embroidery. tiiya.com

YASMIN MANSOUR

The daring yet wearable pieces created in Mansour's atelier incorporate metals, feathers and crystals, alongside whimsical upcycling – in 2017, she made a collection with used Nespresso pods. Whether an evening gown, bejewelled tube top or sequin-studded suit, Mansour mixes feminine cuts with structured layering. Fans include stars such as Lebanese TV host Raya Abirached and Egyptian actor Tara Emad. yasmilmansour.co

1309

From abayas to maxi dresses, tank tops and flares to fringed bags, Ghada Al Subaey's 1309 straddles the full fashion spectrum. Her use of colour blocking, retro and travel-inspired prints in contemporary silhouettes translates into supremely versatile pieces; 70 per cent of her textiles are sustainable and all packaging is biodegradable. Al Subaey also runs The Cutting Studio at the M7 gallery in Msheireb Downtown Doha, where up-and-coming designers are mentored and given resources to develop new collections. 1309studios.com

MARYAM AL DARWISH

Quilted kimono jackets, shibori maxi dresses with hoods and kaftans with embroidered cuffs: while Al Darwish's work sticks to the modest lane of the fashion highway, it stands out with its vibrant colours and quirky prints. It's a favourite with Arab celebrities such as Kuwaiti actor Farah Alsarraf. Pieces are made from all-natural textiles using a zero-waste design process. [@maryam.aldarwish](http://maryam.aldarwish)

WAAD

Taking the abaya into previously unexplored territory, Waad is the go-to brand for fashion-conscious Qataris and Arabs. Founder Waad Mohammed is known for her use of gorgeous materials (velvets, taffeta silks), which feature playful patterns and details that veer far from austere tradition. Her long, pleated coats and capes with geometric trims are all brilliantly versatile, too. waaddesigns.com

MOONLIGHT CONCEPT

Self-taught designer Muna Al Kaabi's label features abayas made from taffeta, linen and Indian wool combined with silk. Contemporary shapes are beautifully embellished with zardozi embroidery, Swarovski crystals and smocking in one-of-a-kind pieces that work both as modest daywear and swimwear cover-ups. Al Kaabi has also collaborated with Ali Hassan, an artist known for his exploration of Arabic calligraphy. moonlightconcept.com

HARLIENZ

Haya Al Adsani debuted her modest womenswear brand HarlienZ at New York Fashion Week in 2019. Since then, it has been worn by Her Excellency Sheikhha Al Mayassa and her fashion-icon mother, Her Highness Sheikhha Moza bint Nasser, as well as Diane von Furstenberg. Inspired by the designer's travels, HarlienZ offers modern must-haves – fluid overlays and one-shoulder cuts that work equally well for breezy lunches and dressy dinners. [@harlienZ](http://harlienZ)

JEWELLERY

GHADA ALBUAINAIN FINE JEWELLERY

Influenced by objects found in hardware stores, Albuainain's designs mimic distinctive architectural forms. Yellow-gold necklaces; rings in concentric circles that can be worn in multiple ways; dangling pear-like diamonds

on neckpieces and ear cuffs are all signature designs. Her bracelets mirror the structure of link chains, while the rings and bracelets in the Digital Garden line recall mashrabiya screens. [@ghadaalbuainainofficial](http://ghadaalbuainainofficial)

KALTHAM'S PAVILION

Founder Kaltham Al Majid comes from a family with a long history of jewellery making. Her Kaltham's Pavilion pieces feature precious gemstones including emeralds, coloured sapphires, diamonds and freshwater pearls, often set in 18-carat gold. Her design references are informed and sometimes playful: Art Deco, classic Islamic architecture and edible foodstuffs such as bubble gum and candyfloss. Intricate detailing and unusual stone settings are her greatest strengths – an expectation that she sets up beautifully with the use of the term pavilion (a reference to the part of a stone's cut that reflects light and impacts its brilliance) in her brand name. kalthampavilion.com

SHOES

HISSA HADDAD

Armed with an engineering degree and a love of fashion, Haddad fuses Qatari heritage with Italian craft at her eponymous footwear company. 'The idea was to create a brand here in Qatar that goes international,' says Haddad, whose international launch was at Paris Fashion Week in 2017. Her elegant stilettos and slip-ons are inspired by classic Islamic building forms and Qatari cultural symbols, with materials such as leather and satin embellished by hand using gold thread, pearls and gemstones. hissahaddad.com

PERFUME

ABDULLA AL ABDULLA

What does one of the biggest influencers in Qatar do when he's had a run of successful collaborations with nearly every luxury brand in the land? Create his own, of course. Three years ago Abdullah Al Abdulla joined with Galeries Lafayette, Doha, and the expert noses at French maison Jean Niel to launch his scent. Signatures include Dawn and Dusk; the latter includes top notes of lemon, raspberry and saffron over a base of amber, vanilla and patchouli. In 2021 he launched a gender-neutral vegan skincare line, Abdulla Skincare. [@abdullafragrances](http://abdullafragrances)



Zulal
Wellness Resort
by Chère Som

IMMERSE
YOURSELF
WHERE
tradition
THRIVES

Learning from our heritage paves the way to our future knowledge.
At Zulal Wellness Resort, we have created a unique blend where past traditions meet future health. Our lifestyle philosophy is centered around Traditional Arabic & Islamic Medicine (TAIM) to nurture your health and spiritual wellbeing through nutrition, mind-body therapies, physical movement, herbal medicine, and connection with nature.

THE ESSENCE OF WELLBEING

WHERE TO STAY

REPORTS ON THE BEST SPOTS TO BED DOWN

IN THE PINK

THE FIRST-EVER RESORT FOCUSED ON TRADITIONAL ARABIC AND ISLAMIC MEDICINE, ZULAL IS AN ALL-NEW OFFERING FOR THE REGION'S WELLNESS SEEKERS. BY PRASAD RAMAMURTHY

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ANA LUI





WHERE TO STAY

FLAMINGOS ARE AN UNEXPECTED SIGHT IN A DESERT – even one that's surrounded by water on three sides like Qatar. On a sandy island, just off Al Khasooma on the country's northernmost tip, a seemingly endless pale strip stretches into the distance, broken only by the spectacle of slow-moving clusters of pink that appear to levitate in the afternoon heat haze. I think of them as a metaphor for the place I'm visiting: Zula Wellness Resort. Set on a mangrove-speckled private beach and managed by Thailand-based Chiva-Som, one of the world's finest destination spas, it stands out with its focus on holistic wellness in a region that's not renowned for it. Perhaps more unexpected is its use of treatments attributed to Traditional Arabic and Islamic Medicine (TAIM), a concept that draws from the writings of physician-philosopher-astronomer Ibn Sina, an icon of the Islamic Golden Age.

TAIM, explains Dr Purnima Siddhanta, Zula's holistic health guru, is an ancient healing system with similarities to Ayurveda and Traditional Chinese Medicine, in which physicians treat illness by targeting core mind, body and spiritual issues, rather than solely the physical manifestations. 'To treat diabetes, I will suggest therapies like hijama, a form of vacuum cupping, which releases toxins, along with the right foods to bring balance within the body,' she says. The use of

larger Zula Discovery, with 120 rooms and suites, is for families. It aims not only to help parents lead a healthy lifestyle, but also teach children the same values through age-specific programmes. There are a range of sensory and cognitive activities for little ones (such as using water to make music, or printing with leaves); treasure hunts, embroidery and finger painting for juniors, and for tweens, kayaking, sand sculpting, cooking classes and mangrove planting.

Given the importance placed on food as medicine, Aizoon (in the Discovery part of the resort) offers an Arabic and international menu that focuses on superfoods. Exquisitely crafted dishes at Acacia, fit for fine dining, include ingredients such as black truffle, lobster and wagyu beef. The lagoon-side café Casuarina has bite-sized meals for post-workout munchies. And Malbu is a beach club with a Mediterranean menu and mocktails (Zula does not serve alcohol). The sole restaurant on the Serenity side, Al Sidr, serves up a menu bursting with Thai flavours. Coconut-dusted prawns with vegan bang bang sauce sit alongside a detox chicken curry and refreshing pomelo salad, each element having its calorie, protein, carb and fat counts listed, although that doesn't stop the team from creating fantastically tasty and low-calorie South-east Asian desserts. I plumped for Aizoon, where my meal kicked off with

THE HOLISTIC HEALTH GURU EXPLAINS THAT THE ANCIENT HEALING SYSTEM USED HERE TARGETS AND TREATS CORE MIND, BODY AND SPIRITUAL ISSUES RATHER THAN SOLELY PHYSICAL MANIFESTATIONS

curative foods as well as a range of endemic herbs, such as *Nigella sativa* (grown on-site), are integral to the healing process. Consultations are thorough and often include blood tests: at the end of mine, I am prescribed tadleek – a deep-pressure massage using warm herbal poultices to help restore my digestive equilibrium. Other treatment options include physiotherapy, Thai massage, abhyanga (a warm-oil massage), craniosacral therapy, reiki and acupuncture, all performed by exceptionally talented and Chiva-Som-trained therapists who show genuine concern for the wellbeing of guests.

Zula is split into two separate zones, each with its own purpose. The 60-bedroom Serenity is for adults (guests aged 16 years and over), and houses the bulk of the state-of-the-art wellness facilities: hydrotherapy pools, saunas, hammams, an Arctic cave and a Himalayan salt room, as well as studios for yoga, movement and Pilates. There's also an aesthetics centre which treats a range of conditions from blemishes to cellulite – even tattoo removal – with non-surgical, minimally invasive procedures, including high-frequency radio waves or laser treatments. The

a light quinoa tabbouleh with goji berries, followed by a delicious spinach and chickpea stew and memorable rosewater-perfumed milk pudding. The three courses weigh in at less than 500 calories in total, the cap for most meals here.

While a significant amount of Zula's produce and seafood comes from local sources, in the long term the resort hopes to establish a farm which will supply at least 60 per cent of its needs. This is part of the sustainability blueprint which currently includes items such as key cards made from bamboo, a solar-powered beach-cleaning machine and the composting of waste which is supplied as manure to farms in the area. Ultimately, a marine reserve is planned to protect this entire coastline. Watching those flamingos peck about their business, I'm sure it's a move they'll appreciate. 🦢

Discovery doubles from about £445 per person; Serenity from about £710, including meals, consultation and some therapies. [zula.com](https://www.zula.com)

Opposite and previous page: private suite, holistic treatments, public areas and delicately plated dishes at Zula Wellness Resort



SLEEP TIGHT

QATAR HAS AN UNPRECEDENTED ARRAY OF PLACES TO STAY.
HERE'S OUR PICK OF THE BEST

Pool at the InterContinental Doha Beach and Spa



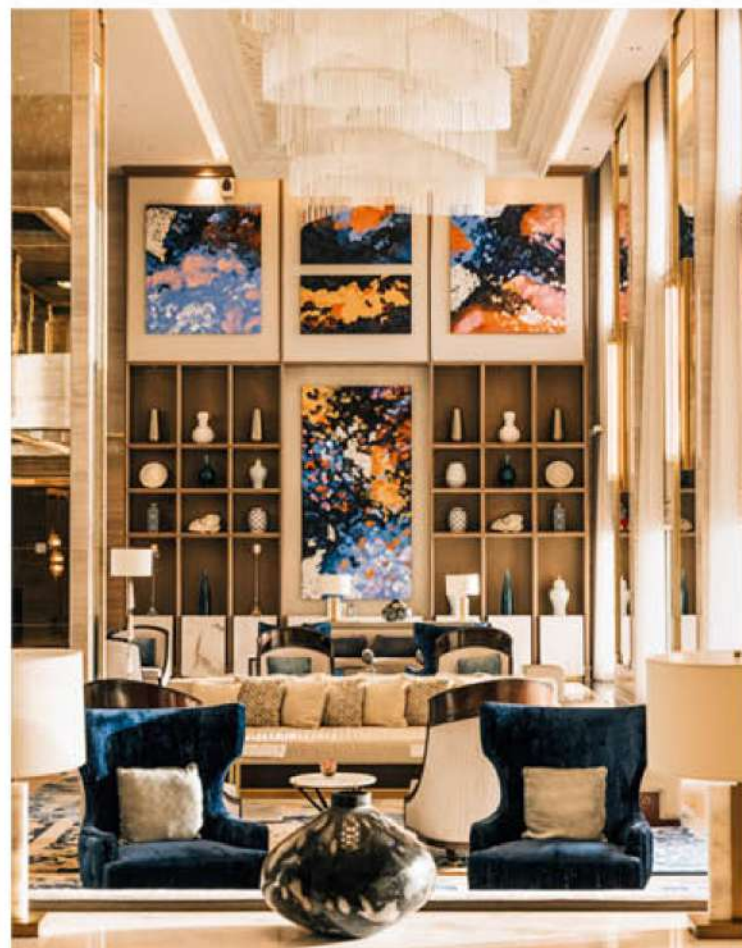
FOUR SEASONS HOTEL DOHA

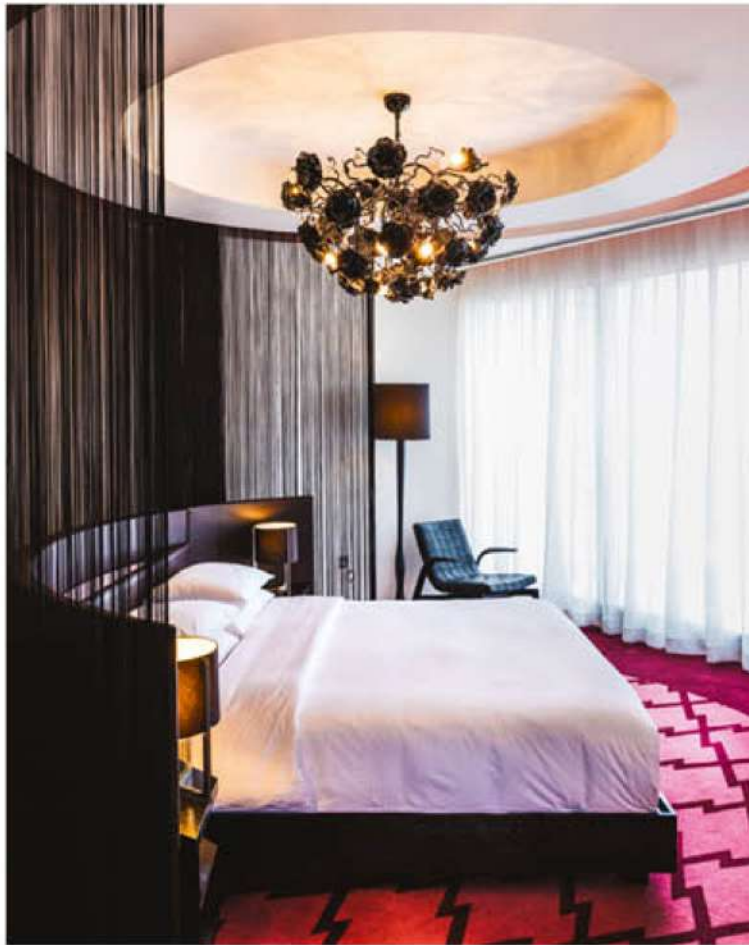
An original on the Doha hotel scene, the neoclassically styled Four Seasons has been renovated by French interior designer Pierre-Yves Rochon, its 237 breezy rooms and suites in blue and neutrals reflecting the hotel's position on West Bay. A stay promises lazy days unfurling by the pool or on the beach, lounging in the shade of date palms. But the hotel is also a culinary superstar. Newly opened Makani Beach Club is a chic seaside spot for easygoing bites such as salads, sushi and pizza, as well as seafood and meat hot off the grill. The Friday brunch is the stuff of local legend, where the drinks flow freely and a constant parade of seafood, noodles, dim sum, oysters and Peking duck spills from live cooking stations at Elements restaurant, to be served on the hotel's shady terraces. The world's largest Nobu sits just offshore at the end of a spit of land, where a well-dressed crowd devours toro tartare and king crab tempura, accompanied by some of the city's finest views from the rooftop lounge. NICOLA CHILTON
Doubles from about £330; fourseasons.com

INTERCONTINENTAL DOHA BEACH AND SPA

A Doha favourite for more than 20 years, the InterContinental has the longest private beach of any hotel in the city. The spa is a draw for expats and locals alike, its signature treatments inspired by the esoteric, including meditation practices and the energy of quartz crystals. There are 14 stellar dining options, from the popular Peruvian restaurant La Mar by star chef Gastón Acurio; to the Parisian-style bar Manko and the Middle East's largest Belgian Café, which serves crowd-pleasing draughts with great views of the skyline from its open-air terrace. The 375 pristine rooms and suites are all on the spacious side, starting at 430 square feet, and those on the upper floors are the ones to book. ULRIKE LEMMIN-WOLFFREY *Doubles from about £183; doha.intercontinental.com*

PHOTOGRAPHS: JACK JOHNS; TOM PARKER





W DOHA

The buzz is palpable in the lobby of this West Bay giant. There's a constant flow of smart business folk prepping for their next meeting and locals popping out of Maseratis and zipping up to Wahm bar, which hosts poolside gigs: the W Doha is where Qataris come to be noticed. The 289 rooms and suites offer a winning combination of city and sea views and a good-vibes aesthetic – all swivel chairs and mood lighting. There's serious dining here too. Michelin-feted chef Jean-Georges Vongerichten presides over two restaurants: Market by Jean-Georges, where the menu draws from the souqs of the Middle East, and Spice Market, an outpost of his now-shuttered NYC hit dedicated to South-east Asian street food. For authentic Italian fare, there's La Spiga by Milanese restaurant Paper Moon, and at Coya, the Pisco Sours flow. PRASAD RAMAMURTHY
Doubles from about £360; marriott.com

THE ST REGIS DOHA

The St Regis spells seamless service, which extends to guests being transported off the plane through immigration and delivered into a waiting limousine. A 24-hour butler service provides everything from restaurant recommendations to laundering travel-worn outfits, and little luxuries appear as if by magic during the day, from delicious pistachio shortbread with your morning coffee to the lift operator knowing your name – no mean feat, considering the hotel, with 336 rooms and suites, is one of Doha's biggest. All rooms look out towards West Bay or man-made island The Pearl, while a vast, cabana-fringed swimming pool skirts the sea beyond. Restaurants range from the incredible Hakkasan to New York-style Astor Grill steakhouse. Within an easy walk of Katara Cultural Village, with its cafés and art spaces, the St Regis Doha also has one of the city's best contemporary art galleries, Eiwán Al Gassar, on-site. ULW *Doubles from about £247; marriott.com*





MONDRIAN DOHA

Fantastical interiors by Dutch designer Marcel Wanders include a dreamscape of spiral staircases leading to nowhere and golden flowers and eggs set against a calming neutral palette, all inside an exterior metal 'nest' that nods to Qatar's national bird, the falcon. The 270 rooms and suites are a light, airy and comfortable blend of opulence and quirky design. But the full force of Wanders' creativity is unleashed in Rise, the rooftop pool and bar, where geometric black-and-white tiled floors and walls meet an amber-hued stained-glass dome, a turquoise pool, larger-than-life gilded lanterns and red lounge chairs. Add terrace views that span the bay, The Pearl and Lusail city and this is Wonderland redefined. For dining, 'Iron Chef' Morimoto's fabulous Japanese; Wolfgang Puck's famous steaks at Cut; Walima for contemporary Qatari cuisine and 12 Chairs Caviar Bar – you can guess the ingredient of choice – complete the picture. ULW Doubles from about £145; sbe.com

PHOTOGRAPHS: JACK JOHNS; ANA LUI; ANDREW URWIN





BANYAN TREE DOHA AT LA CIGALE MUSHAIREB

Acclaimed Paris-based hotel designer Jacques Garcia, renowned for New York's NoMad and La Réserve in the French capital, has created a masterful inner-city oasis filled with cutting-edge interiors inspired by the elements – earth, fire, water and air. The latter comes to the fore at Vertigo on the 28th floor, where a chic crowd gathers under a retractable glass roof for drinks and pan-Asian nibbles. Floor-to-ceiling windows mean panoramas are a knockout, especially at sunset. The Asian theme continues at Thai restaurant Saffron; there's also Panya Lounge, a patisserie with picture-perfect high tea, and contemporary Indian at Qalamkarri. At Il Galante, food is inspired by 18th-century Italian chef Vincenzo Corrado. The hotel is a hit with families as bookings include access to Quest, a vast indoor theme park with a rollercoaster, cinema, bowling alley and the world's tallest indoor drop tower. KIM WYATT
Doubles from about £340; banyantree.com

GRAND HYATT DOHA HOTEL AND VILLAS

The Grand Hyatt's vast lobby, with its 55-foot floor-to-ceiling windows, sets the scene for this glamorous enclave. The hotel is known for its many cafés and restaurants, tucked away in landscaped gardens, alongside an impressive choice of secluded swimming pools – one indoors and four out. A sheltered private beach – among the longest in Doha – draws young families and also plays host to Monkey Tale, one of the city's most popular bars for music and mixology. The exterior echoes traditional Arabian style with wind towers, alcoves, arches and arabesques, while inside, the 249 rooms and suites – including 91 seaside villas – are ultra-sleek. Above all, this spot, across from the Lagoon Mall and a five-minute taxi ride from the bustling shopping zones of The Pearl, is a great base in the capital. ULW
Doubles from about £183; hyatt.com





WHERE TO STAY

HILTON SALWA BEACH RESORT AND VILLAS

The Abu Samra settlement lies at the south-western tip of Qatar, on the cusp of Saudi Arabia, yet just a 90-minute transfer from Doha. Hilton's resort here is akin to a mini town, with 361 rooms, suites and villas, the thrilling Desert Falls water park, a full-sized football pitch, two swimming pools and a two-mile beach. But its most considered aspect is the inclusive universal design, including wheel-chair-level switches, roll-in showers, Braille room-service menus and cutlery with adaptable handles. All rooms in the main building, with Mediterranean-blue accents, have private balconies. There are also self-contained villas around an Arabian-style village next to the main hotel. The spacious beach-side villas, which have private pools, are perfect for families. Restaurants include waterside Chinese Miss Wong; Tuscan at Dante Cucina Italiana and Levantine for mezze on the terrace under fairy-light-festooned trees.

RACHEL MORRIS *Doubles from about £270; hilton.com*

MANDARIN ORIENTAL, DOHA

In this rarefied world of calm, exquisite craftsmanship meets elegant local design touches: geometric patterns inspired by Islamic art, tiny bubbles in glass lamps that represent Qatar's pearl-diving heritage and carpets the shade of desert dunes. On Barahat Msheireb, a short walk from Souq Waqif, the hotel is well positioned for café pit stops and exploring pedestrian-friendly streets. Liang restaurant is exceptional, serving Chinese regional favourites via a partnership with Hong Kong's Maxim's group. From dim sum standouts – silky har gau and fluffy xiao long bao dumplings – to chilled Sichuan chicken, wok-fried lobster and Peking duck, this is the real thing.

Book a Club Deluxe Room or Club Studio Suite for complimentary access to the MO Club, a lounge and courtyard serving breakfast, snacks, cocktails and generous aperitivi – not to mention the best cookies in Doha. NC

Doubles from about £340; mandarinoriental.com

PHOTOGRAPHS: JOE AGDEPPA; GERRY O'LEARY





WHERE TO STAY



THE RITZ-CARLTON, DOHA

On its own islet of The Pearl, The Ritz-Carlton is one of the grande old dames of Doha – last year, the hotel celebrated its 20th anniversary. The sweeping drive through lush greenery is a seductive prelude to the 21-storey lobby, crowned with a jaw-dropping Swarovski-crystal chandelier – one of 264 ornamenting the property. The superb four-floor Club Lounge offers a seasonal roster of food tastings and sommelier choices as well as a weekly line-up of interactive cultural events and activities. For downtime, facilities are among Doha's finest, with a junior-Olympic-sized indoor pool, two tennis courts and a squash court, and a spa that combines Arabic, Asian and European wellness principles. Outside, swimming pools are flanked by mature acacias, plus there's a private beach and dedicated marina. ULW
Doubles from about £235; marriott.com

LOOK TO THE HORIZON

THE HOTEL OPENINGS MAKING THEIR MARK ON QATAR'S EXPANDING SKYLINE

Lusail – the sustainably built future city a 20-minute drive from Doha on West Bay's north coast – has welcomed two new headliners. The spectacular crescent-shaped Katara Towers (pictured) is now home to the all-suite **Raffles Doha**, where add-ons include private cinemas, wine cellars and humidors. Its line-up of bars and restaurants includes the contemporary Italian Alba by Michelin-feted chef Enrico Crippa. Rooftop lounge Acoustic is set to become a hot spot for live music and Silk Road-inspired tapas, and Malaki lounge the place to join a local crowd for people-watching and afternoon tea. In the same building, the **Fairmont Doha** – with super-yacht-inspired interiors – is a sleek counterpart to its Raffles sibling. With 12,000 square feet



dedicated to fitness – including a climbing wall – the hotel aims to create an international sporting community, with an events programme and visiting trainers. Meanwhile, fans of Indian food can look forward to a new restaurant from Mumbai's adored Masala Library.

West Bay also has its share of newcomers. **The Doha Edition**, the first Qatari outpost of the self-proclaimed 'anti-hotel' chain, brings its signature brand of modern, minimalist design to the city, promising 200 guest rooms as well as two restaurants, three bars and a nightclub.

The towering 375-room **Pullman Doha West Bay** has vertiginous views, and its eight bars and restaurants include an Italian restaurant and a sports bar. Meanwhile, in Katara Cultural Village, **The Chedi Katara Hotel and Resort** is a calming 91-room retreat that borrows elements from Mughal and Ottoman architecture. For complete seclusion within its lush landscape, book one of the 32 villas, which all have private gardens and swimming pools. In The Pearl development, the **St Regis Marsa Arabia Island** is a hotel-island of 193 hotel rooms and 261 residence suites plus 245 homes, all serviced by the brand's unique butler service. Bells and whistles include seven restaurants, a Clinique La Prairie spa and a round-the-clock concierge.

PHOTOGRAPHS: ANA LUJI, SHAKEL SAFEER/ALAMY. HOTEL OPENINGS WRITTEN BY NICOLA CHILTON AND PRASAD RAMAMURTHY



ST REGIS

MARSA ARABIA ISLAND • THE PEARL QATAR
THE RESIDENCES

An Exquisite Island Getaway

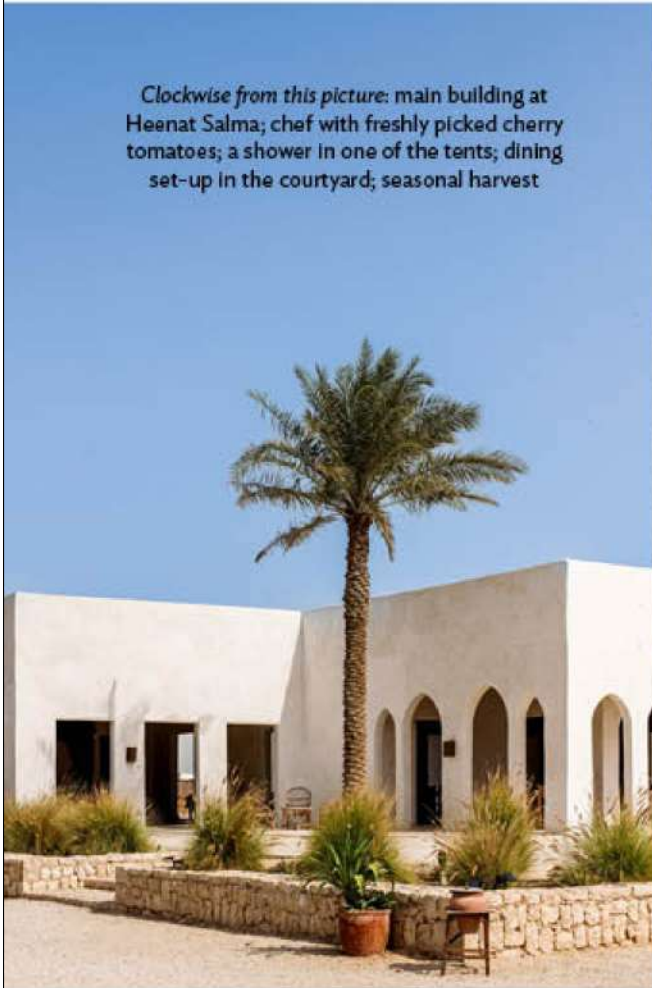


Perched majestically in the heart of Porto Arabia, The St. Regis Marsa Arabia Island offers a private sanctuary, where a glamorous and residential lifestyle awaits. An All-Suite hotel, with 193 lavishly decorated hotel suites, 9 World Renowned Dining outlets, A State of the art gym, 8 swimming pools, 8 cabanas, a 1 km. jogging track around the perimeter of the island, the first Clinique La Prairie Medical Spa to open in the region and complimentary access to the St. Regis Doha beach facilities by “water taxi”.

The St. Regis Marsa Arabia Island is the address where exquisite experiences, timeless rituals and sophisticated settings come together offering a glamorous lifestyle that combines the best of comfort and luxury.

The Residences at The St. Regis Marsa Arabia Island, The Pearl - Qatar
T +974 4420 4444 | stregismarsaarabia.com

Clockwise from this picture: main building at Heenat Salma; chef with freshly picked cherry tomatoes; a shower in one of the tents; dining set-up in the courtyard; seasonal harvest



ROOT AND BRANCH

HEENAT SALMA FARM IS A GAME-CHANGING BACK-TO-NATURE ESCAPE THAT PLUGS INTO SUSTAINABLE LIVING WITHIN STRIKING DISTANCE OF THE CAPITAL, SAYS NICOLA CHILTON

JUST 40 MINUTES' DRIVE FROM DOWNTOWN DOHA is a place of unexpected peace and calm. From the main gate a track leads through a grove of date palms, where a farmer on a tricycle waves as he passes. In a patch of sunlight, a cat slowly rolls on its back in the sand. A mohawked hoopoe swoops low beside the car, a flash of orange, black and white feathers. It feels very far from the traffic and skyscrapers of the capital.

This isn't a *Truman Show*-style fantasy. Heenat Salma Farm is a project of Caravane Earth, a foundation established by Fahad Al-Attiya to promote social, cultural and ecological transformation by reconnecting people with nature, their roots and themselves. The farm has been in Al-Attiya's family for 50 years and was a major part of his childhood. As a former chairman of the Qatar National Food Security Council and organiser of the Delivery Committee of COP18, he knows a thing or two about agriculture, climate change and sustainable development. His work has given him an in-depth understanding of the fragility of our ecosystems and the environmental challenges we face today and in the future. 'Once you're exposed to the facts and realities, you cannot just stand idle and do nothing,' he says.

Traditional sadu blankets and cushions encourage guests to mingle long into the evening. 'I often say that if you use traditional materials that are good, and use a method that is proper, then the consequence is beauty,' says Al-Attiya. Everything is designed here and made largely from stone, mud, wood and thatch. Tent interiors are rustic-chic; simple yet comfortable. Floors are covered with woven khoos palm-leaf mats, topped by vintage Moroccan rugs from Bedouin communities. Comfy beds are layered with cosy blankets from Fez and camel-wool throws crafted by artisans from the Vimor Handloom Foundation in India. Bathroom fixtures are carved from local stone. Each tent features an antique wooden chest, traditionally used by Kuwaiti pearl divers for storing equipment and food during their long months at sea.

Lodge manager Prithvi Singh Kullar walks me around the farm. Leafy lettuces are planted next to rows of dill, radishes and onions. We enter a greenhouse where a farmer shows us vines heaving with green tomatoes. Currently 35 varieties of plants and trees are grown here; by next season, the aim is to expand this to 100. No chemical fertiliser or pesticides are used, and there's a zero-waste policy. We walk past

THE PROPERTY OFFERS WEAVING, POTTERY AND CALLIGRAPHY WORKSHOPS, PLUS THEATRE SHOWS FOR KIDS AND FILM SCREENINGS. GUESTS CAN LEARN ABOUT REGENERATIVE PRACTICES AND HELP WITH HARVESTING

While responsible agriculture may be at the heart of Heenat Salma, Al-Attiya and his team have created far more than just a farm. The on-site kitchen uses food from the fields. Visitors join weaving, pottery and calligraphy workshops. There's a wellness programme, including tai chi and qi gong classes, plus theatre shows for children and film screenings. Guests can join tours, learn about farming and regenerative practices, help with harvesting, and come face to face with sheep, goats, horses and chickens. All this may feel quite unexpected in modern Qatar, a place not known for its bucolic landscapes. And Al-Attiya wants to change that. 'Unfortunately, it's the case that these natural settings have become unexpected. We should not have this feeling when we engage with ecological structures. It should be the norm,' he says.

In contrast to the muted tones of the Doha suburbs, the colours at Heenat Salma seem brighter and warmer, the play of light and shadow more pronounced. At its centre is a minimalist, single-storey building where the warm afternoon light floods through handsome arches onto hand-tufted rugs and leather pouffes. Furniture is made locally from natural materials. Hand-woven palm baskets line the shelves, and tufts of fluffy fountain grass stand in glass jars on the tables. Outside, a wide terrace abuts a sleek ozone-filtered pool, the perfect spot for tucking into fresh fruit salads; hot-from-the-oven manakeesh with zaatar and rocket; labneh balls crusted with farm herbs, and much more.

It's possible to stay here, too. A number of cosy tents are pitched in a circle around a stone fire pit that takes the chill off winter evenings.

chicken coops and grazing horses, down a track marked by the hooves of hundreds of sheep and goats. Doe-eyed lambs bounce past as shepherd Othman looks on with that beatific smile that seems to come naturally here.

In a country where water is scarce, the property's nine wells play an important role. But the team is also rediscovering ancient techniques for water harvesting, using approaches such as collecting condensation and rainwater, and nets that trap mists which are then fed into the site's reservoirs. While power currently comes from the grid, the idea is to become self-sufficient, using waste and other resources to create electricity. 'All these interventions we're trying to implement now should theoretically allow us to rely on our own means to generate power,' says Al-Attiya.

There are plans to add new elements to the farm too, with permanent lodges in the works. Could this be the model for a new type of community-based tourism in the Middle East? 'We want guests to find a place of tranquillity, one that will help them disconnect from the cacophony of life,' says Al-Attiya. 'They will be able to learn something new and walk away with a positive attitude.' If that's the goal, it looks like Heenat Salma is on the right track. 📍

Tents for two, including breakfast and activities, start at £560.
For details and to book, visit [@heenat_salma](#)

PHOTOGRAPH BY ANA LUI

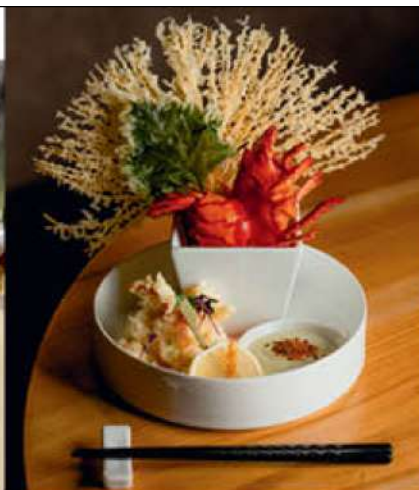
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Hamad International Airport
قطر QATAR







Clockwise from this picture: Morimoto at Mondrian Doha; bar at Bibo, Al Gassar Resort; tacos at La Bodega Negra, Al Gassar Resort; adding the finishing touch to a dish at Riyasat; Coya at W Doha; a dish at Bibo; lobster tempura at Morimoto

TAKE A SEAT

FROM ANDALUSIAN AND LEVANTINE TO MODERN PERUVIAN AND JAPANESE, DISCOVERING DOHA THROUGH ITS CHOICE OF GLOBAL FOOD WOULD REQUIRE MONTHS, NOT WEEKS, SAYS AYESHA BEDI

Over the past few years Doha has upped its foodie credentials, stepping out of Dubai's shadow to become a city with global culinary clout. Well-heeled locals along with a robust expat community have helped to create a diverse food culture. Peruvian fare, particularly, is having a moment. I experience this first-hand as I eat a softshell-crab taco and sip Pisco at **Coya**, at the W Doha. Chef Gastón Acurio first introduced Doha to Peru's rich flavours at **La Mar**, in the InterContinental, which is much loved for its ceviche. Seafood of any kind is well received in Qatar, given its fishing heritage. Whether that's an ocean-to-table feast at **L'wzaar Seafood Market**, where the day's catch is likely to be native hamour fish, or platters of sushi and the famous black cod at **Nobu** at the Four Seasons. Nobu and fellow Japanese chef Masaharu Morimoto are part of a tranche of top international names that has converged on Doha – see also **Bibo** by superstar Spanish chef Dani García at The St Regis's Al Gassar Resort. Yet as befits such a cultural melting pot, there are menus to suit all tastes and budgets. Buzzy Al Jazeera Street does the city's best bibimbap at **Tofu House** and Thai larb gai salad at **Khaosan**. Not too far away, at Fereej Al Nasr, try **Afghan Brothers'** authentic mutton mandi and the shish taouq sandwich at **Turkey Central**. Of all the cuisines here, though, Levantine flavours from the region now occupied by Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Palestine and Israel remain the most popular. For limitless mezze, plus knockout city views, head to **Bayt El Talleh**; at nearby Armenian restaurant **Mamig** the fishne kebab – cooked in a cherry sauce – manages to be tart, sweet and savoury all at once. While meat is intrinsic to Middle Eastern cooking, vegan food has been gaining a foothold, helped by a clean-eating movement kick-started by young Qatari Ghanim AlSulaiti at his trio of restaurants that includes all-natural dessert bar **Myilk**. This builds on the foundations laid by the city's modest South Indian cafés, which have been catering to vegetarians for years with crispy dosas and sambhars. And now Indian classics are being elevated at standout spots such as **Riyasat**. Everywhere you turn Doha's encyclopaedic offering means the world is, quite literally, there on a plate.



WHY WE TRAVEL

THE ENCOUNTERS THAT CHANGE HOW WE SEE THE WORLD

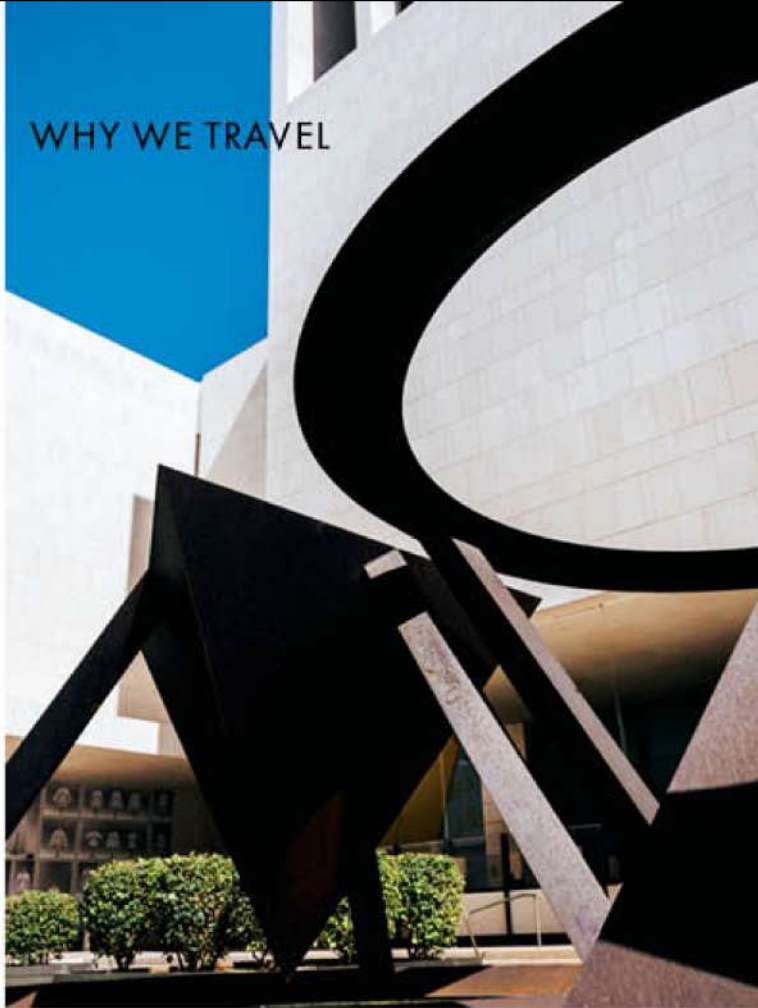


Clockwise from this picture: butter lettuce at Cut by Wolfgang Puck at the Mondrian Doha; signature ceviches at Coya; Nobu interior; sushi at Morimoto, Mondrian Doha; muffins at Bibo; flame-grilling at Riyasat, Al Gassar Resort

PHOTOGRAPHS: JACK JOHNS, ANA LU, TOM PARKER, ANDREW URWIN

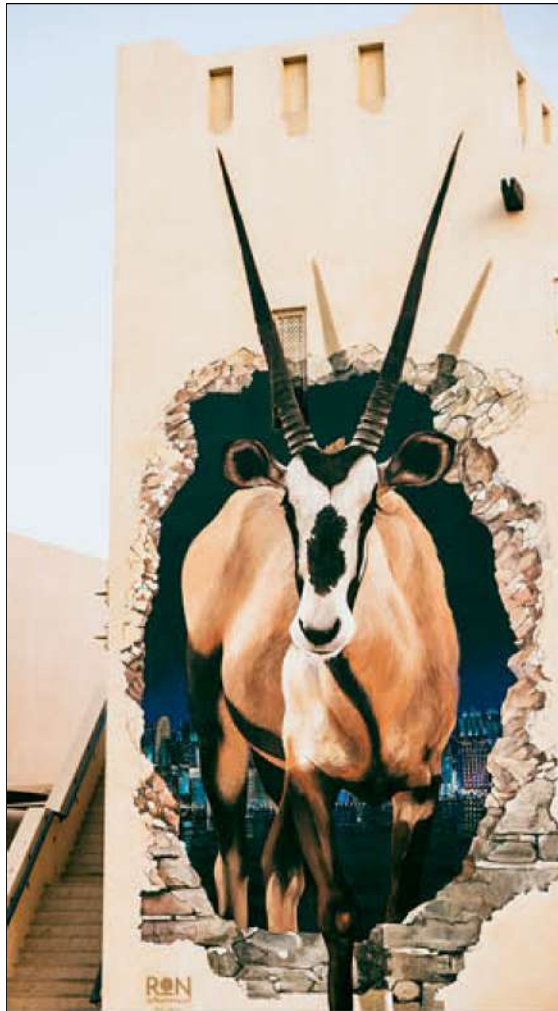


WHY WE TRAVEL



Clockwise from left: *Untitled (Trench, Shafts, Pit, Tunnel and Chamber)* by Bruce Nauman at M7; *Pouce* by César Baldaccini in Souq Waqif; a piece by Dimitrije Bugarski at Katara Cultural Village; *The Miraculous Journey* by Damien Hirst outside Sidra Medicine





BRINGING THE INSIDE OUT

FROM BRONZE BABIES TO NATIONAL EMBLEMS, THERE'S ART AROUND EVERY CORNER IN QATAR

THE ROLL-CALL OF EMINENT ARTISTS whose works bring community and public spaces alive in Qatar is worthy of any world-class museum: Eduardo Chillida, MF Husain, Bruce Nauman, Tom Otterness, Louise Bourgeois... In the past 15 years almost 60 pieces of all mediums and styles have been commissioned by the state for parks, libraries, cultural hubs and natural landscapes across the country. Iraqi artist Ahmed Albahrani's *The Challenge*, five cast-bronze hands vying for possession of a ball, was commissioned to mark the Men's Handball World Championship, and in the run-up to the 2022 FIFA World Cup an additional 40 works were put in place, cementing the country's status as a giant outdoor art gallery. The trail begins at Doha's Hamad International Airport, where Dutch sculptor Tom Claassen's *Falcon* – a 40-foot-tall representation of the national bird in gilded steel and aluminium – towers on a ledge; meanwhile, out on the streets, the likes of Tunisian-French artist eL Seed fuses street-art and Arabic calligraphy in a manner that's distinctly original. **PRASAD RAMAMURTHY**

PHOTOGRAPHS: JACK JOHNS; ANDREW URWIN



Clockwise from top left: *Oryx Going Ahead* by Martin Ron at Katara Cultural Village; Tom Claassen's *Falcon* at Hamad International Airport; part of Subodh Gupta's *Gandhi's Three Monkeys* at Katara Cultural Village

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WHY WE TRAVEL

WE'RE OFF!

KIM WYATT AND FAMILY REVEL IN THE DOZENS OF ADVENTURES WITHIN EASY REACH OF DOHA AND ACROSS QATAR

As winter approaches and the scorching heat fades, the siren call of the great outdoors is irresistible.

Everyone heads off on an adventure, my family included. Thrill-seeking husband and two lively sons in tow, I emerge into the blissful cool. While camel rides and dune-bashing are typical outings,

Qatar has much more to offer families, from kitesurfing to stand-up paddleboarding. For over a decade we have ticked off a long bucket list. Cycling at Al Bidda Park? Check. Snorkelling at Al Safliya Island? Check. Gondola rides at Katara Beach? Check. Our youngest son Samuel, aged 13, recently declared doing things together makes him 'proud and happy'. Cue mother booking as many family activities as possible. Beyond Doha, we've found extraordinary areas of rugged wilderness. An hour's drive from the capital on the north-eastern coast, Al Thakira is home to one of the country's oldest and most ecologically important mangrove forests, a resting place for migratory birds where, if you're lucky, you'll spot flamingos en route from southern Europe to Africa. Here, we've kayaked through a winding maze of channels filled with thickets of trees and shrubs (our 16-year-old son Luke, always forthcoming, has given this place his official seal of approval). It's one of our favourite weekend haunts, where the kids can swap their screens for a full-spectrum immersion in the great outdoors. Among the mangroves is Bin Ghannam Island, also known as Purple Island. This craggy spot has a rich history of textile dyeing dating back millennia (its name comes from the colour of the dye produced from the sea snails that once inhabited it). Excavations have also uncovered ceramics from the Kassite period in the second millennium BC. But it's not only laid-back activities on offer. Kitesurfing has really taken off as Qatar's reputation as a watersports destination grows. Rashid Al-Mansoori, a former member of the national team, believes that the flat, shallow lagoons of the country's coastline, combined with its steady north winds, make this the ideal place to practise the sport, and he's inspiring a new generation with his school, Salty Kites. Under his guidance, Samuel has kite-surfed the powdery stretch of Fuwairit, a small village about 60 miles north of Doha. Whether on the water, in the desert or close to the city, there is plenty for families to do. And with activities suitable for the summer too (early mornings are ideal for sea swims, theme parks are full of watery rides for keeping cool) and a friendly, welcoming sporting community, even the grumpiest teenagers may find they enjoy leaving their comfort zones.



Kitesurfing with Qatari champion Rashid Al-Mansoori at Salty Kites

READY FOR ACTION

HOT-AIR BALLOONING

For superb Doha views, book a hot-air balloon from Aspire Park with Asfary, who can also arrange SUP and yachting. aspirezone.qa; asfary.com

KAYAKING

365 Adventures organises kayaking across Qatar, plus horse riding, dragon boating and more in the capital. 365adventures.me

KITESURFING

Run by Rashid Al-Mansoori, Salty Kites teaches all levels at a number of locations, and new neighbour Fuwairit Kite Beach resort has seafront rooms and a yoga studio. saltykites.com

THEME PARKS

Desert Falls Water and Adventure Park has more than 50 rides. There's also the vast, indoor Doha Quest and Angry Birds World's 'nest' of rides, some indoors, some out. salwabeachresort.qa; dohaquest.com; angrybirdsworld.qa

ATHLETICS

Al Bidda Park has everything from basketball courts to cycling tracks – and even zip lines. albiddapark.com

WATERSPORTS

Head to Katara Beach for waterskiing, parasailing, gondola rides and more. katara.net

SNORKELLING

Qatar's 350 miles of coastline are great for snorkelling; uninhabited Al Safliya island is easily reached by dhow or speedboat from Doha. 365adventures.me

EXPLORING THE DUNES

From camel riding to quad-biking and dune-buggies, a day in the desert is an unmissable family adventure. arabianadventures.qatar.com

ROCK CLIMBING

Esqalar Sports runs daily classes at Aspire Park, from one-hour children's sessions to longer courses for adults. esqalar.qa

PHOTOGRAPH: JACK JOHNS



B12 Beach Club Doha

A Premium, Family-Friendly beach club destination in Doha. Enriching people's lives by combining first-class entertainment elements through a blend of art, music, sports, well-being, and endless activities.

f t i @b12beachclubdoha

WHY WE TRAVEL



DOHA'S BEST BARS

TOP HOTELS ARE AMONG THE VENUES LICENSED TO SERVE DRINKS IN QATAR, AND COMPETITION AND

VERTIGO, BANYAN TREE DOHA AT LA CIGALE MUSHAIERB

Huge wooden sculptures inspired by the works of early-20th-century French artist Alexandre Noll set the tone in this 28th-floor space. Using the freshest ingredients and modern techniques, bartenders present cocktails as 'art in a glass'. The vodka-based Above Doha is a refined blend of mandarin juice and chocolate bitters, while the silky smooth Umami contains gin, Fernet-Branca and fruit. Sip with a selection of hors d'oeuvres by head chef Alejandro Reyes, under the retractable roof. *From £13; banyantree.com*

B-LOUNGE, THE RITZ-CARLTON, DOHA

At this Asian-fusion restaurant and bar, head mixologist Leo Salman is inspired by exotic spices and essences from around the world. One of his most famous cocktails is the Maha Bodhi – a combination of pandan-flavoured vodka, sake and passion-fruit puree. The food leads with Japanese staples;

the backdrop is a view of the hotel's marina, and a line-up of well-known local and visiting DJs provide a pulsating, constantly changing soundtrack. *From £14; bloungedoha.com*

SKYBOX61, KEMPINSKI RESIDENCES AND SUITES DOHA

On the 61st floor of this soaring hotel – the tallest structure in the smart West Bay area – this high-end sports bar has views all the way to the Corniche. Lively fans refuel with beers and American-style comfort food: chicken wings, onion rings and burgers. *From £14; kempinski.com*

WAHM LOUNGE, W DOHA

For a hotel chain that wears its party badge with pride, this W does not disappoint. Wahm, with its boudoir-esque interior and poolside outdoor area, is a seductively first-rate venue. The lounge has an in-house DJ, but also regularly hosts local and visiting talent to add flair to the musical offering. Cocktails use ingredients found abundantly in

the region: the gin-based Honeydew Melon contains Arabic jasmine flowers and lemon, while Souq Sour is an artful concoction of dark rum with yuzu and citrus peel. Snacks run an extensive gamut from Asia to the Mediterranean. *From £12; wahmdoha.com*

BELGIAN CAFE, INTERCONTINENTAL DOHA

Belgian draught and artisan beers such as Kwak, Maredsous and La Chouffe are the biggest draw here, along with European classics including schnitzel, bitterballen and steaming pots of mussels with crispy Belgian fries. The vintage-style décor and terrace with skyline views make this a great spot for an uncomplicated evening of fun. Order the Hanky Panky, a herbaceous Martini dating back to the 1920s that's sharp and not overly sweet, or the Mai Tai – when it was invented by Trader Vic in the 1940s, it was said to have strained global rum supplies. Here, at the very least, you're almost certain to reorder. *From £10; doha.intercontinental.com*



From far left: Manko Doha; Belgian Café; Wahm at W Doha; Sweet Temptation cocktail at 12 Chairs Caviar Bar



COCKTAILS ARE STIFF. FROM SCENIC SUNDOWNERS TO ELITE MIXOLOGISTS, NABEELA TARIQ FEELS THE FLOW

IRIS, SHARQ VILLAGE AND SPA THE RITZ-CARLTON, DOHA

This beachfront bar is great for sundowners, with soul and R&B tunes setting the scene. The cocktail menu is arranged by elements such as gluten content, ingredients (pollen, sesame seeds) and flavour profile (smoky, citrusy, earthy). Try the Cuban Affair, a bittersweet mix of black rum, sake and sesame seeds, or Nouveaux, a gluten-free take on a Negroni made with Penja white pepper. *From £17; irisdoha.com*

MONKEY TALE, GRAND HYATT DOHA HOTEL

On a private, adults-only stretch of beach furnished with loungers and cabanas plus a Café del Mar soundtrack, this place has an all-day party atmosphere and draws a lively crowd. Monkey Tale's vibe appeals to a youthful clientele (and the wooden overwater swing is a seriously popular spot for selfies). Cocktails such as Cheeky Monkey and Gorilla Juice play predictably on the primate theme

– thankfully the international food (burgers, pizza, sushi) is perfectly fit for humans. *From £14; monkeytale.me*

THE SECRET GARDEN, MARSA MALAZ KEMPINSKI, THE PEARL – DOHA

The hard-to-find entrance to this gem is through a garage – but up on the roof, The Secret Garden fulfils its promise with exotic plants and Gulf views, where friends gossip over Margaritas and share platters of sliders and pizza. *From £15; kempinski.com*

MANKO DOHA, INTERCONTINENTAL DOHA

Peru meets Paris at this spot by Michelin-feted chef Gastón Acurio. The focus is on Pisco-based drinks such as the Chilcano Lemongrass (with chamomile, lemongrass and ginger beer) and the Pisco Sour Maracuja (with gomme syrup and bitters). As well as three bars and a cigar lounge, there's a knockout panorama of the Gulf and West Bay skyline. *From £15; manko-doha.com*

INFINITY ROOFTOP LOUNGE, ALWADI HOTEL DOHA MALLERY

Inspired by the novel *Around the World in 80 Days*, the menu at this sprawling hideaway offers food and drink from more than 28 countries. The Moscow Mule comes in its traditional copper mug, while the wine draws from the Old and New Worlds. The go-to for a chic crowd. *From £11; alwadihoteldoha.com*

12 CHAIRS CAVIAR BAR, MONDRIAN DOHA

Qatar's first caviar bar is a 12-seat hotspot that could be a backdrop in a Wes Anderson film, thanks to chic interiors by Dutch design maestro Marcel Wanders. Just as elegant is the food, in which caviar takes centre stage. Pair it with a Lovebird, a sweetened orange vodka with lychee, lime and elderflower served in a delicate bird-shaped glass; or a Sweet Temptation, a blend of Cognac, rum, lemon and vanilla, clarified with milk and smoked in a glass vessel for an extra layer of flavour. *From £20; sbe.com. All prices are per cocktail*



Ceramicist Reema Abu Hassan
at work in her studio-shop,
Clay Encounters



CREATIVE BY NATURE

LOCAL CURATORS, ARTISTS AND
DESIGNERS ARE REFRAMING QATAR'S
CULTURAL NARRATIVE WHILE ROOTING
THEIR WORK IN TRADITION, SAYS
ULRIKE LEMMIN-WOOLFREY

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JACK JOHNS



ONE WALL OF MY LIVING room in Doha features an artwork that places the figure in Caspar David Friedrich's *Wanderer Above the Sea of Fog* in front of the city's skyline. This digital relocation brought the 19th-century masterpiece not only into modern times, but also to Qatar. I had spotted the picture by Nasser AlKubaisi in a small gallery in Msheireb Downtown, and I loved it. Not just because the painter of the original is my ancestor, but because of the Doha connection. Other works by AlKubaisi include a take on Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa* in a burka and Johannes Vermeer's *Girl with a Pearl Earring*, her head shaved in empathy with cancer patients. "The first thought I have when I look at an original," says the artist, "is what if the painting was painted in Doha? What if the classic paintings I admired reflected the culture of my beloved country?"

AlKubaisi's work struck me as a sign of a larger trend powering a homegrown generation of creatives. Underneath the veneer of the starchitectural wonders and much-lauded public works by celebrity designers, these young artists are digging deep into their heritage and expressing it in contemporary ways. Muna Al-Bader, for instance, used the ghutra (men's headscarf) in a piece for telecom provider Ooredoo, while Noor Abuissa covered a dhow in her geometric designs for the Red Bull Dhow Challenge.

This is a Qatar galaxies away from the one I knew in 2000, when I first lived here. Back then, there were just a handful of cultural institutions; there was the old Qatar National Museum, a pale shadow of the monumental, Jean Nouvel-designed space we have today. And the city's art installations were pretty much limited to the Pearl Monument on the Corniche and the Arch of Rumeilah in Al Bidda Park. For a proper cultural fix you needed to travel further afield.

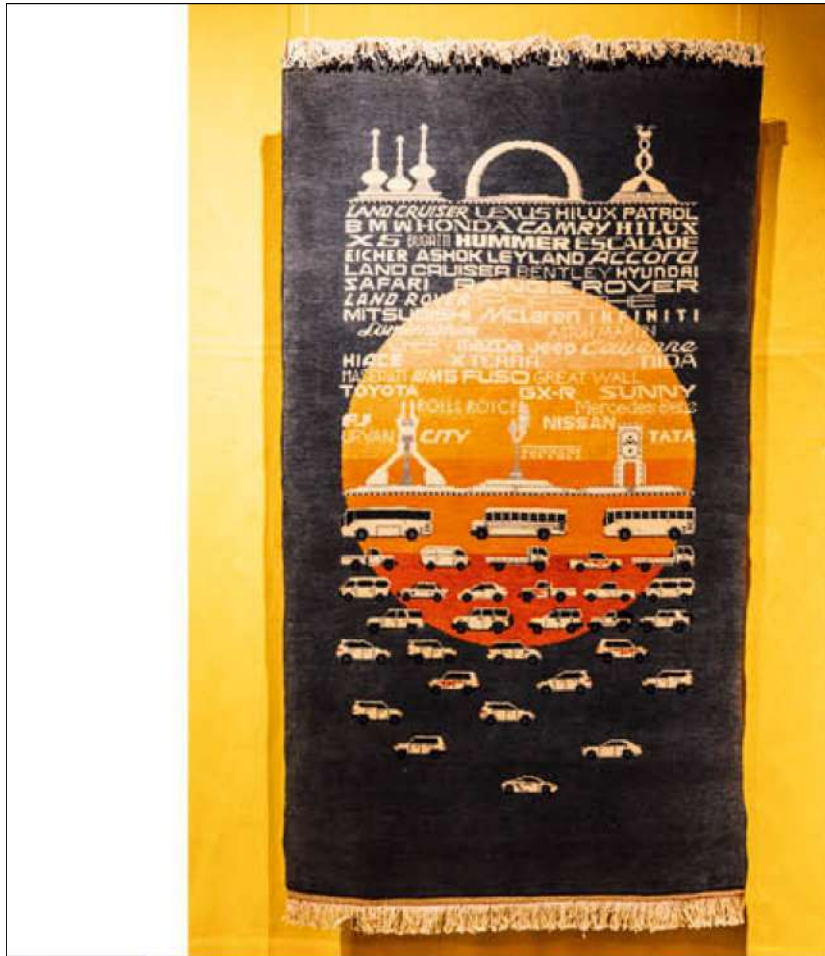
Over the past two decades, though, I've had a ringside view of change.

I left in 2005, the year the Qatar Museums Authority (now Qatar Museums) was inaugurated, and each time I returned another milestone had been met. In 2008, IM Pei's striking Museum of Islamic Art opened. The Fire Station arts hub followed in 2012. Transiting through the brand-new Hamad International Airport in 2014, I spent my time not shopping, but searching out incredible installations on the concourses.

Since moving back to Doha in 2021, I've visited exhibitions such as *Virgil Abloh: Figures of Speech*, which are not only world class but innovative in their reach and curation. I have marvelled at the entirely reinvented Msheireb Downtown Doha, an ambitious yet sustainable regeneration of the old commercial district; the start-up design hub M7 and the arrival of concept stores such as Presentedby at the Doha Design District. The latter is a venue for design-centric events, retail spaces and a 3D-printing and digitisation centre. Inspired by all the construction, designer Maryam Al-Homaid has produced handmade tapestries which can be bought at Studio 7, the cool retail store inside M7 – long gone are the kitschy camels and made-in-India trinkets that were once Qatari souvenir staples. At the National Museum's gift shop you'll find unusual items such as a minimalist tent calendar by Aisha Nasser Al-Sowaidi and the quirky, illustrated mugs of Maryam Yaqoob Al Madadi – all exquisitely crafted, contemporary and yet inherently Qatari and Arab in origin. Today the city is brimming with talent – both established and emerging – in all creative sectors. And there is no need to travel abroad for my culture fix anymore. Everything I need is right here, at home. 📍



From top: cultural hub M7, Msheireb Downtown Doha; digital artist Nasser AlKubaisi. Opposite, clockwise from top left: tapestry by Maryam Al-Homaid; the designer with one of her works; furniture at concept store Studio 7; outside M7; room at the Culture Pass Club



THE TEXTILE ARTIST

MARYAM AL-HOMAID

Back in 2020, two tapestries caught my eye at the Eivan Al Gassar Gallery in The St Regis Doha. At first glance they appeared to depict abstract motifs. A closer look unravelled a mix of city skyline, calligraphy and Arabic typography. This is the work of Al-Homaid, who combines traditional and digital design methods. She's now added endangered crafts such as sadu weaving to her repertoire. Alongside American artist Levi Hammett, she's designed handwoven tapestries that comment on Qatar's exponential growth, and has also drawn on the city's multicultural population as inspiration for her take on the mashrabiya screens typical of the region. Her work has been shown at Milan's Salone del Mobile, Maison&Objet in Paris and the Moscow Art Fair. maryamalhomaidd.com





THE STREET ARTIST MUBARAK AL-MALIK

As you drive around Doha you'll spot mesmerising murals, particularly images of women in batoolas, the distinctive traditional face masks. The creative responsible is Al-Malik, Qatar's foremost street artist, whose pictures can be seen across the capital. While the batoola is his signature, he paints other things too – Doha cityscapes, for example. Influenced unarguably by the artist's skill and popularity, and with the emergence of graffiti as an art form in Qatar, Doha hosted the Middle East's first ever Pow! Wow! mural festival in 2021. It brought together 12 local, regional and international artists to create stunning pieces on previously bleak walls. Challenging the mindset that street art is antisocial as well as the cultural restrictions on depicting people in art, Al-Malik is brightening up the city's walls.
@mubarak1221

Clockwise from above: AIKubaisi reworks Vermeer; Noor Abuissa in her studio; a signature Al-Malik artwork outside the Fire Station. *Opposite,* Al-Sowaidi in the townhouse she designed at the Culture Pass Club





THE MULTIDISCIPLINARY DESIGNER

AISHA NASSER ALSOWAIDI

Be it her townhouse design for the Culture Pass Club; her copper *Central Midkhan* incense burner at the National Museum of Qatar, or her contemporary souvenirs at the museum's gift shop, Al-Sowaidi's work merges traditional culture with modern progress, inspirations from the past, her memories of home and its scents and textures. In addition there's her pet project, Liwan, a members-only space where young and emerging artists are able to experiment with numerous techniques and media and which aims, she says, 'to foster a creative community in a beautiful mid-century building with an inspiring history behind it'. The project is housed in a long-abandoned girls' school that was given a new lease of life – exactly what the multidisciplinary creative is doing for the country's design scene.

aishaalsowaidi.com



THE CURATOR

LAYLA IBRAHIM BACHA

Bacha is senior arts specialist at the Qatar Foundation, a non-profit headed by Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser, mother of the current Amir. The foundation's focus is education, research and community development, and its institutions encompass seven international university outposts, including Carnegie Mellon and Georgetown; Mathaf Arab Museum of Modern Art, and Sidra Medicine, where Damien Hirst's *The Miraculous Journey* – 14 vast bronzes depicting human gestation – is located. Bacha manages the collection of more than 150 pieces (40 per cent of Arab origin) and selects the major ones to display at the dozens of institutions the foundation runs. Qatar National Library, for example, features an oversized Quranic verse on knowledge by Iranian artist Ramin Shirdel. 'Art can describe the history and culture of a country, the heritage of its people, and the significance of their identities,' says Bacha. In 2021, she oversaw the installation of *Seeroo fi al ardh*, the very last work by the late Indian artist MF Husain at Education City on the outskirts of Doha. 'I feel that art helps to keep us faithful to our identity and gives us the chance to share it with everyone,' she says. @laylaibrahimbacha



THE FILMMAKER

SUZANNAH MIRGHANI

This Sudanese-Russian filmmaker won the ArteKino Award at the 2022 Cannes Film Festival's L'Atelier for *Cotton Queen*. In 2021, she placed an Oscar nomination within Qatar's reach with her short film, *Al-Sit*, which was shot on location in the wake of Sudan's 2019 revolution. 'Al-Sit has had an incredible festival run,' says the Doha-based creative, 'winning 39 international awards, including six Academy Award qualifying prizes, which I've been told is a record.' She moved here from Sudan a decade ago and has made several shorts about her adoptive country. *Hind's Dream* (2014) was about a Bedouin girl waiting for her husband to return from a hunt; *Caravan* (2016) examines daily life through the reflections of people stuck in a Doha traffic jam.

@suzannahmirghani



THE JEWELLER

NADA BINT KHAMIS AL-SULAITI

Al-Sulaiti brings Qatar to life in Hairaat, her jewellery brand. Her signature lines reference the Al Jassasiya petroglyphs and the Al Zubarah ruins. Inspired by Qatar's pearling history, she engraves delicate beads with intricate calligraphy, while her Al Awsaj collection is an ode to the flowers of the desert shrub that grows wild around the peninsula. Using artisanal skills in an organisation run predominantly by women, her work often disrupts the traditional approach. The designer, who won a Golden A' Design Award in 2015, prefers to use lesser-known gemstones and push the boundaries of jewellery making. 'My golden rule is that there is no rule,' she declares. 'You have to think outside the box and create opportunities for yourself.' hairaat.com

Clockwise from top left: Cai Guo-Qiang's *Fragile* at the Qatar Foundation; Suzannah Mirghani; jewellery, and jeweller Nada bint Khamis Al-Sulaiti. Opposite, Layla Ibrahim Bacha in front of MF Husain's *Seeroo fi al ardh*



THE FASHION DESIGNER

WADHA AL HAJRI

Walking into the minimalist boutique Wadha, in the National Museum of Qatar, you could be forgiven for thinking you'd stumbled into a fashion exhibition – which is not too far off the mark. Wadha Al Hajri was the first fashion designer to be exhibited in Doha's Modern Art Museum. That was back in 2013, and today her architecturally inspired designs are the antithesis of the ornate, richly decorated clothing many perceive as Arab fashion. Al Hajri's collections are pared back and executed with an exquisite simplicity that has established her as one of the Middle East's brightest talents. She was also tasked with the interior design of one of 14 townhouses at Culture Pass Club, Qatar's first members-only arts hub; the result, with its clean lines, muted colours and geometric furniture, suggests an interiors collection could be next in the works. wadha.co

Clockwise from top left: Wadha Al Hajri; a colourful Al-Malik artwork; Wadha pieces in the National Museum of Qatar. Opposite: views of the studio, and ceramicist Reema Abu Hassan at work in Clay Encounters



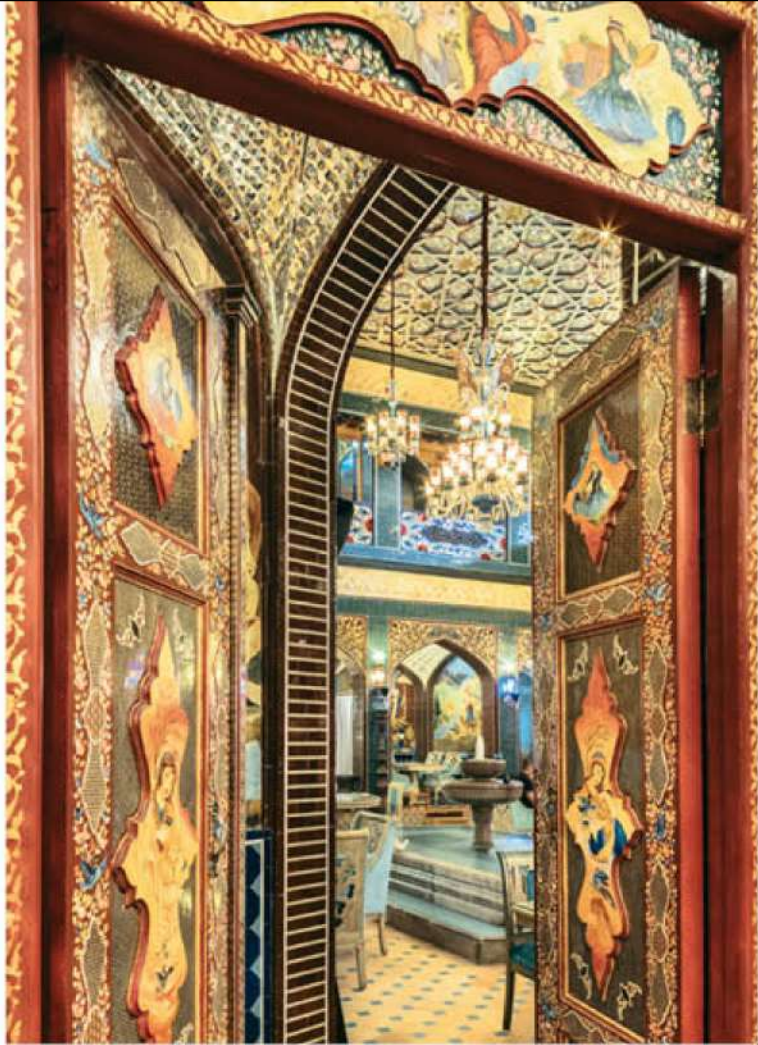


THE CERAMICIST

REEMA ABU HASSAN

Clay Encounters, the design studio of Palestinian-Canadian Hassan, has grown from a small workshop that once made cups for local cafés in and around The Pearl to a swish, design-focused atelier. Today, it's part workshop, part ceramics school and part members-only club for those looking to perfect their craft. In between teaching pottery to children and adults, the former architect collaborates with local artists such as textile designer Paula Bouffard (their work is on sale at Hilton Doha The Pearl Hotel Lobby Café). She's also designed vases and pots for Qatar Airways' business lounge at Hamad International Airport, and her sculptural pieces have been exhibited at the Venice Biennale, Maison&Objet in Paris and Milan's Salone del Mobile. What does she most like about her work? 'There's a quotation,' she says: 'To make a pot, one must attain a centre' – a reference to the almost meditative effects of sitting at the potter's wheel. 'I find this is the most interesting part of being a ceramicist and it's also the reason why many people come to the studio.' clayencounters.com







TRADE SECRETS

IN A CITY TEEMING WITH STARRY ARCHITECTURE,
SOUG WAQIF REMAINS DOHA'S TRADITIONAL
SOCIAL HEART AND THE STOMPING GROUND
FOR RESIDENTS, SAYS PRIYA D'SOUZA

PHOTOGRAPHS BY TOM PARKER







Left to right: colourful displays at the sadu stalls; an ornate teapot and tea seller; sack of dried chillies on sale in the spice market

ON ANY GIVEN EVENING GROUPS OF PEOPLE SIT at restaurants and outdoor cafés, smoking shisha and sipping tea or coffee. The older gentlemen discuss football, politics, business. The younger men are on their laptops or shooting the breeze. Couples, locals and visitors, some with children in tow, enjoy a leisurely stroll, soaking up the scents, the sounds and the scene; perhaps stopping for an ice cream or karak (tea with milk) from a cart, snacks from a vendor or to check out the latest Arabic potboiler at Novo Cinemas. This is Souq Waqif, a market that's reckoned to be over 250 years old and is still at the centre of daily life in Doha.

This is where residents shop for both essentials and extravagances; where they plan elaborate welcome dinners and bid goodbye to friends. The picture-postcard main boulevard is lined with some of the best dining options in the country, serving everything from Argentinian to Azerbaijani, Lebanese to Persian and, of course, authentic Qatari cuisine. The tables are set so close together that on busy nights you often cannot tell where one place ends and another begins.

Away from the main drag, each sikka, or alleyway, of this labyrinthine market is dedicated to a different commodity. Small shops are busy with artisans in action; embroiderers of bishts (the cloak worn over a long tunic, or thobe); perfumiers selling heady attar fragrances. You'll also find gorgeous lanterns, ceramics, carpets, pashminas and all the fragrant spices that make up the souq's fiery bouquet. Plus there are souvenirs of all kinds: from photographs of old Doha to quirky bugs in glass jars at the taxidermist, or an oud or darbuka if you're looking for musical instruments. Until the mid-1990s, everyone did most of their shopping here. Back then we called it the Irani Souq. Families like mine, from the Indian subcontinent, would go to buy Belgian chocolate and Iranian gaz (sweet nougat) before we returned home for a holiday.

Souq Waqif has always played an important role in Doha. It dates right back to when the city was still a village and people gathered on the banks of Wadi Msheireb to trade. Waqif means standing in Arabic, and is so-named because merchants sold their wares standing in up to knee-deep water. 'This wasn't just a place of trade,' says prominent Qatari architect Ibrahim M Jaidah, who designed the Al Thumama Stadium, one of the 2022 FIFA World Cup venues, and whose family members still run shops here. 'People would also come here to get their news. After all, ships came in from everywhere: Iran, India, China and even Zanzibar.' Jaidah was raised in the area and has fond memories

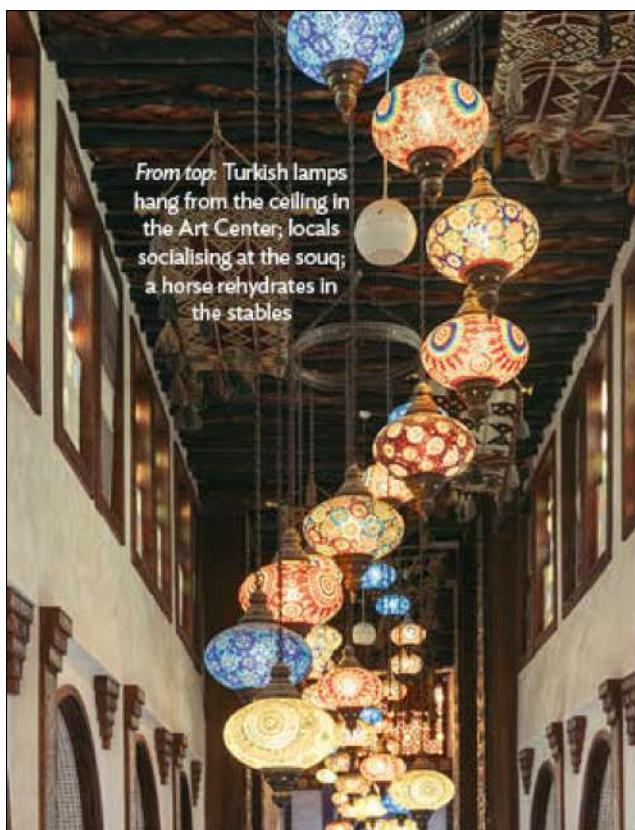
of afternoons spent at the souq. 'It's where we learnt how our father and uncles did business; it made an impact on our thinking and gave us an appreciation of different cultures,' he says. It's this living legacy that makes the souq much more than just a large market. 'I consider it a community space that is inherited from generation to generation,' says Shaima Sherif, whose company, Embrace Doha, connects visitors to the best of Qatari heritage and conducts popular tours here. After a major fire in 2003, the souq was reconstructed using vernacular architecture and construction techniques, which is why it looks as 'old' as it does.

Mohammad Yusuf sells spices, nuts and dates in Al Doha, which has traded since the 1950s. 'Unlike in the past, tourists now visit to experience a traditional market. But our clientele is [still] significantly local. Tourists make up around 20 per cent of our customers.' Yusuf still imports from the same markets, mainly India, Thailand, the UAE and China. Nageshwar Gupta, a tailor at the 70-year-old Al Hawaj Center for National Dress, agrees. 'Tourists stop by to see us work, but we make bishts, abayas and farwas (Bedouin winter coats) only for locals and Arabs from the Gulf countries. We continue to buy our fabric from Al-Ahsa in Saudi Arabia, while the zari (silver and gold thread) for the bishts comes from India and Germany.'

Much has changed since the 1970s when I was a child making my way through the sikkas, and much has not. You still see older Qatari women, some wearing batoolas (the traditional face covering), rushing into shops, buying sadu weaves to update the majlis (gathering space); pots, pans and cooking cauldrons; fabrics by the yard; handmade abayas and kaftans and gold jewellery. It's where any Qatari (or visitor) buys camping gear, from tents to filigreed barbecue skewers; where men gather for a game of dama (checkers) and to drink gahwa helw (sweet Arabic coffee) at the Majlis Al Dama community centre; and where the sight of boys carrying pet falcons on their arms stops you in your tracks.

The beating heart of this city, Souq Waqif is a smorgasbord of diversity; a fusion of cultures, nations and social classes; a melding of past and present. Tea and samosas now co-exist with gastronomic experiences, traffic has been superseded by pedestrian-only zones and cultural events. But at its core it is the same. French artist César Baldaccini's installation *Pouce*, a giant golden digit in the courtyard by the police station, embodies it all – thumbs up to Souq Waqif for still being so magical. 🇶🇪

From top: Turkish lamps hang from the ceiling in the Art Center; locals socialising at the souq; a horse rehydrates in the stables



SOUQ WAQIF: THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE

KHADIZA BEGUM REVEALS HOW TO MAKE THE MOST OF THE ULTIMATE SHOPPING EXPERIENCE

WHAT TO BUY

PERFUMES

Qatar has always produced fine fragrances, and the most famous of all is oud, from the agar tree. Head for the Oud and Arabic Perfumes Souq, a two-storey building with more than 50 shops. Otri Perfumes uses French and Italian raw materials not just in perfumes, but also in sprays, oils and incense. Other highlights are Al Jazeera Perfumes and The Perfume Factory. otri.qa; qatar.aljazeeraperfumes.com; theperfumefactory.qa

SOUVENIRS

With everything from antique wooden chess sets to Arabic tea services, dates and honey from Yemen to cardamom, mace and other spices from India, there are hundreds of items to catch your eye – and fit easily in your carry-on bag. Other notable pieces include woven khos (palm-leaf) baskets and tasbeeh (prayer beads) made from semi-precious stones. For a broad selection, check out Al Dham Gift Shop, Binshlah Gift and Souvenirs, Arumailah Gift and Masterpieces or Qahtani and Khelaifi.

PEARLS

Among the city's most notable handicraft stores is Pahlwan Saad Ismail Al Jassim. Former pearl diver Al Jassim is considered something of a national treasure, and was famously given the shop by the former Amir to showcase the country's pearling history. He sells seawater and freshwater pearls in an abundance of shades: white, pink and grey. And if you ask nicely, the octogenarian might even regale you with stories of his youth.

WHERE TO EAT, DRINK & SHISHA

SHAY AL SHOMOUS

This is one of Doha's most popular places for a traditional Qatari breakfast. Owner Shams Al Qassabi (notably the first woman to start a business in the souq) recommends regag, a wafer-thin flatbread available in more than 35 flavours. 'It takes great dexterity to make,' she says. The baid shakshuka (scrambled eggs) and aseeda (porridge) are also delicious.

BANDAR ADEN RESTAURANT

Just across the alley from Shay Al Shomous, this restaurant serves classic Yemeni dishes such as salta and fahsa (both types of stew) and mandi (tandoor-cooked meat with rice). Service here is warm and friendly, and the traditional seating on the floor inside is filled with groups of Yemeni families. bandaraden.com ➤



SADU CARPETS

A traditional Bedouin woven fabric, sadu is one of the most historically significant items to take home with you. Once commonly used in the construction of tents in nomadic communities, these sturdy, geometrically patterned textiles (which are predominantly woven by women) are often made into wall hangings and rugs. In the cluster of shops here you'll find rolls of colourful sadu carpets, as well as stacks of rugs and cushions in classic Arab and Bedouin tribal designs. Head to Al Rayyan Sadoo for an immense and diverse selection, or Mohamed Abdulla Kaseem Shop.

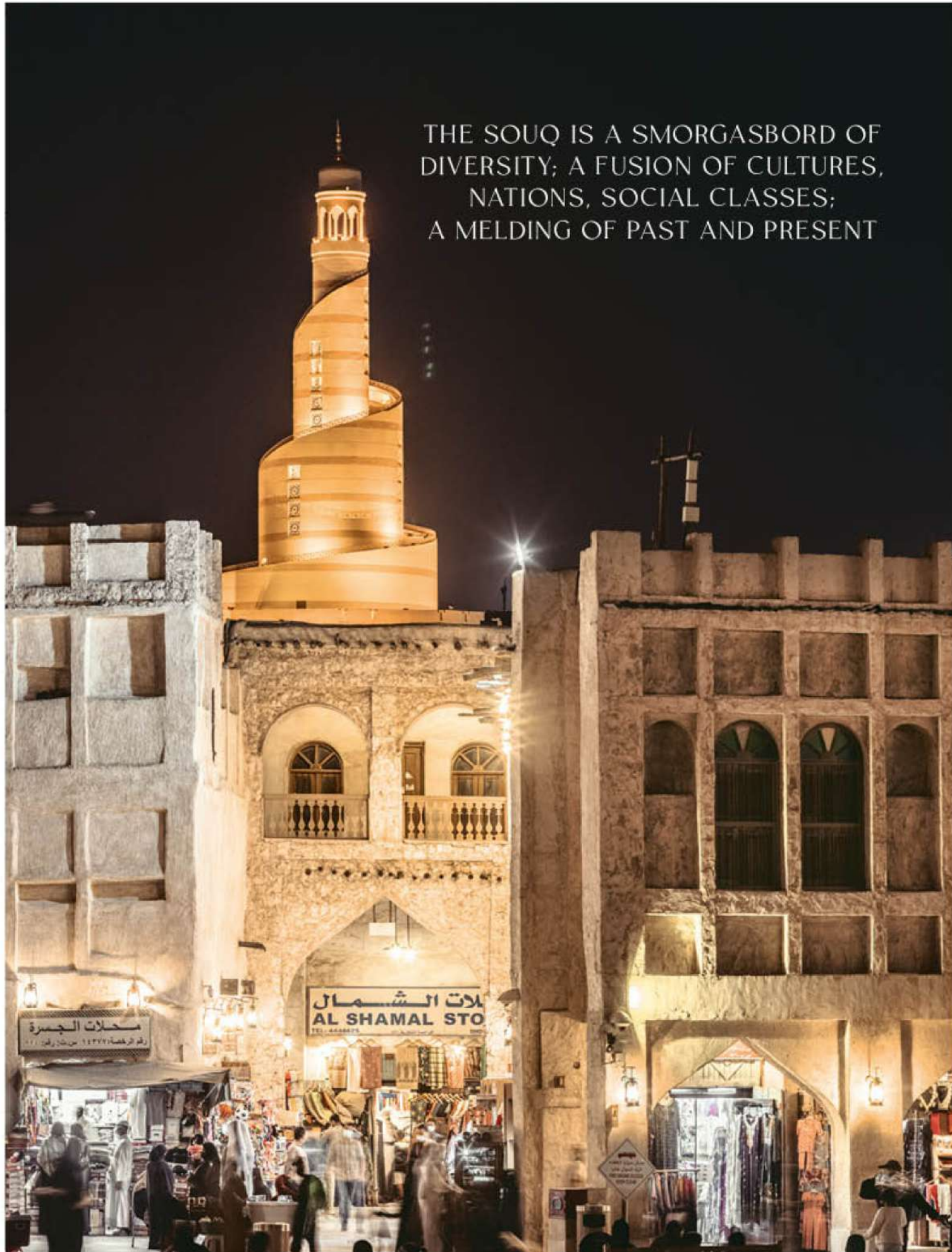


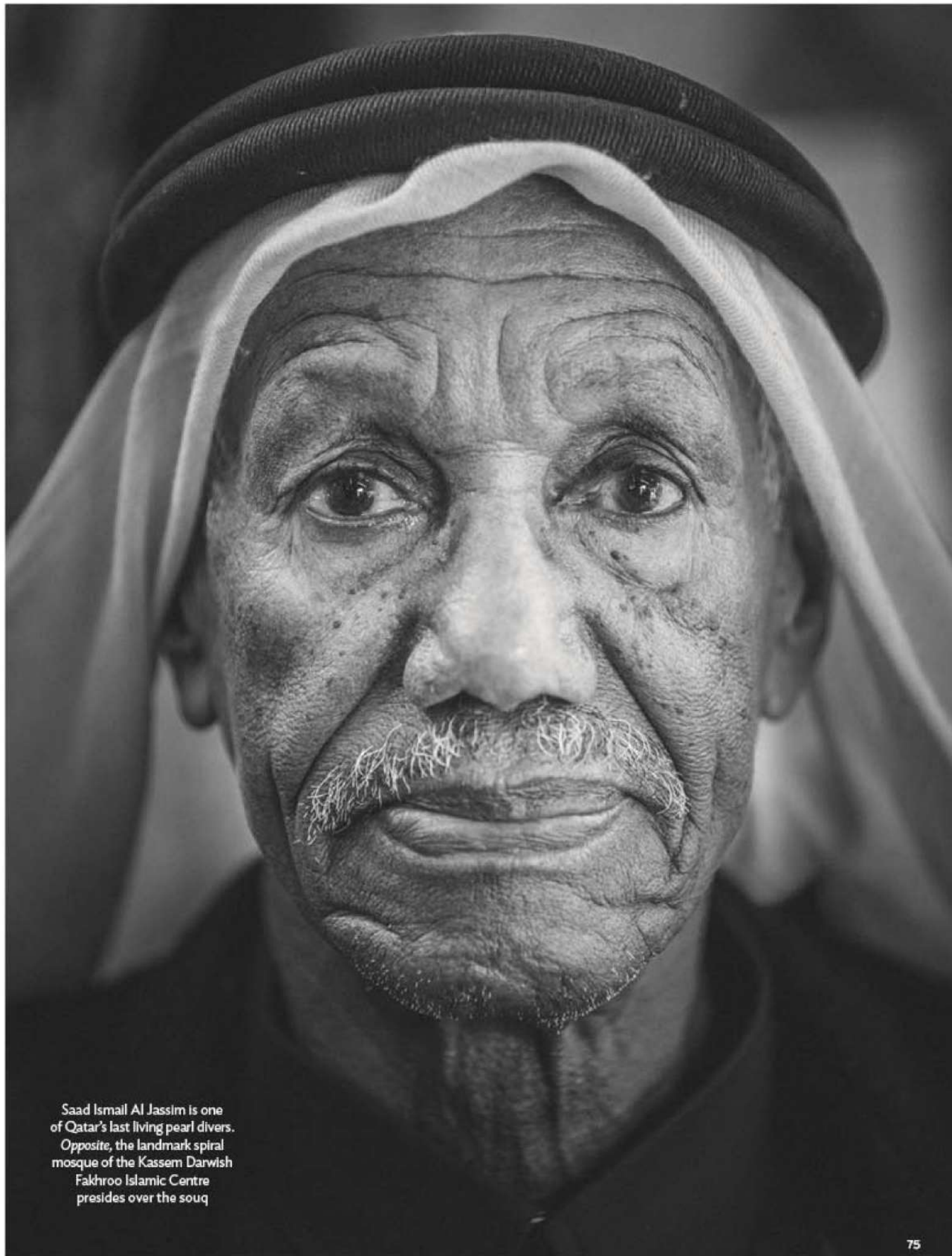


Clockwise from this picture: textiles on a loom; Shams Al Qassabi in her restaurant, Shay Al Shomous; breakfast regags; bird for sale at the Falcon Souq



THE SOUQ IS A SMORGASBORD OF
DIVERSITY; A FUSION OF CULTURES,
NATIONS, SOCIAL CLASSES;
A MELDING OF PAST AND PRESENT





Saad Ismail Al Jassim is one of Qatar's last living pearl divers. Opposite, the landmark spiral mosque of the Kassem Darwish Fakhroo Islamic Centre presides over the souq



Clockwise from this picture: souvenir stores;
Souq Waqif Art Center; shopping
for a ghutra (headscarf); feasting at
Parisa Souq Waqif



DAMASCA ONE

On a busy square at the edge of the souq, this spot specialises in Syrian food, from hot and cold starters such as hummus and fattoush salad to beetroot mutabal, as well as traditional platters. Thanks to its shisha master Abdullah, the restaurant is also one of the best such places in Doha – and the location is perfect for people-watching. damascarestaurant.com

PARISA SOUQ WAQIF

There are walls studded with tiles patterned in Moorish designs; mirror-work inlays that took three years to piece together; stained-glass windows and twinkling chandeliers – this outpost of The Ritz-Carlton's Sharq Village and Spa is a masterwork of opulence. Equally, the Persian food is elegantly presented and delicious. Must-try dishes include kebab shishlik and Akbar joojeh (saffron chicken); there's also an extensive vegetarian menu. ritzcarlton.com

DESERT ROSE

This restaurant at the Al Jomrok Boutique Hotel is an intriguing space where Arabian-style furniture seamlessly merges with scenic European decor. The extensive menu, too, takes diners on a journey through several cultures, offering a mixture of international and Arabic cuisine. Popular dishes that bring in crowds of expats include borscht, a hearty beetroot soup, varenyki dumplings and syrnyky, cottage-cheese pancakes. tivolihotels.com

NAKHCHVAN

Occupying two floors of a building adjacent to the fire station, this restaurant is renowned for its Azerbaijani menu. Signature delicacies

include shah pilaf, a saffron-flavoured rice with meat, chestnuts and dried fruits that's cooked inside a flatbread, and lavangi, chicken breast stuffed with nuts and raisins. The Azerbaijani version of baklava (or pakhlava), loaded with walnuts and cardamom, is a standout dessert.

AL AKER SWEETS

This legendary confectioner is famed across the country for its wide variety of mouth-watering Arabic sweets such as umm Ali, an Egyptian bread pudding soaked in milk and nuts. But possibly the most noteworthy dessert is the humble kunafa, an oozy, syrupy cheese pie encased in shredded filo pastry. alakersweet.com

WHERE TO STAY

SOUQ WAQIF BOUTIQUE HOTELS BY TIVOLI

This set of eight hotels within the Souq Waqif precinct makes a brilliant shopping base. For downtime, there's the rooftop pool at Al Mirqab and the hammam at Al Jasra, both of which can be used by guests of all the hotels (a buggy service connects properties). Rooms are furnished with thoughtful touches (coffee machines in some, desks and bathtubs in others); those in Al Jasra are the most spacious but Arumaila gets our vote for being the most atmospheric. tivolihotels.com

WHAT TO DO

FALCON SOUQ AND HOSPITAL

The falcon is Qatar's national bird and hunting with them is a traditional sport. At the Falcon Souq people buy the birds and equipment to rear and train them. Inside the hospital (falcons are brought here for check-ups, treatments and operations) is a museum dedicated to falconry.



CAMEL AND HORSE STABLES

On either side of the Falcon Souq are stables for the horses and camels of the state constabulary. You can spot the camels from a distance and occasionally visitors are allowed to walk through the horse stables. At dawn and dusk, keep a look out for the mounted police, who trot through the souq.

SOUQ WAQIF ART CENTER

This lively cluster of galleries and workshops is home to dozens of Qatari and expat artists who work across mediums including painting, ceramics, calligraphy, handicrafts and metalwork. They can frequently be seen in action, and you're welcome to

stop for a chat about a possible purchase. swacqatar.com

SOUQ WAQIF TOURS

Embrace Doha offers a range of cultural tours. Like the souq itself, these help visitors discover the region's history, architecture and archaeology – as well as taste traditional Qatari food. embracedoha.com

GOOD TO KNOW

International hotels are among the venues licensed to serve alcohol in Qatar, but given Souq Waqif's cultural importance, those here don't serve it. Shops close from about noon to 4pm Saturday to Thursday. On Fridays, they open at about 4pm.



Clockwise from above:
macarons at Société;
Blended Café; madrouba
(savoury porridge) at Desert
Rose Café; seating at Go
Home; Torba Store; a spiced
sago pudding at Desert Rose
Café; coffee at Nomad;
chef-owner Noof Al Marri of
Desert Rose Café; pastries at
Nomad; shelves and seating
at Torba Store; a feast at
Desert Rose Café



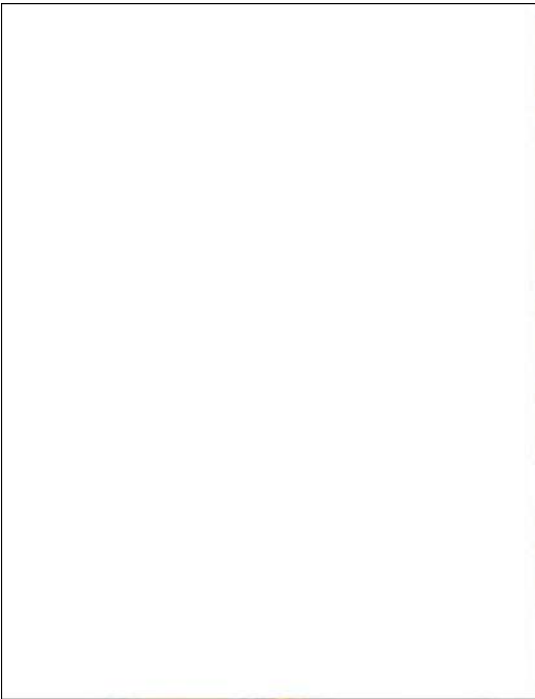


THE TASTE MAKERS

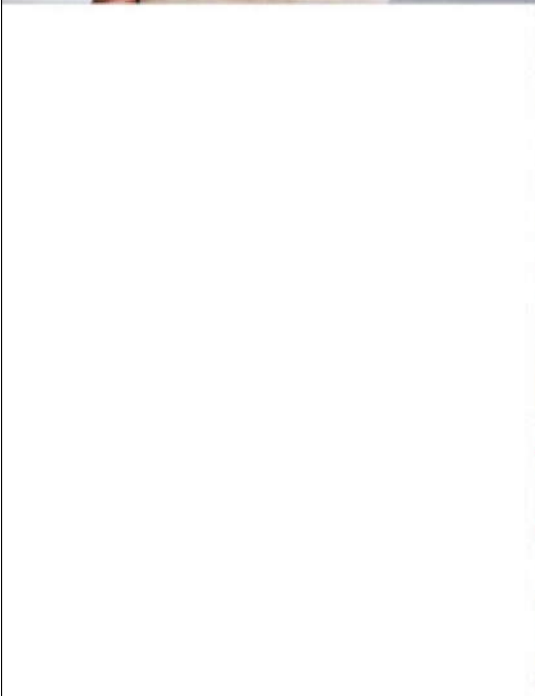
QATAR'S RICH FOOD CULTURE DIFFERS FROM THE REST OF THE REGION.
LONG-TIME RESIDENT RACHEL MORRIS MEETS THE PEOPLE CHAMPIONING
HOMEGROWN FLAVOURS AND ADDING A MODERN SPIN

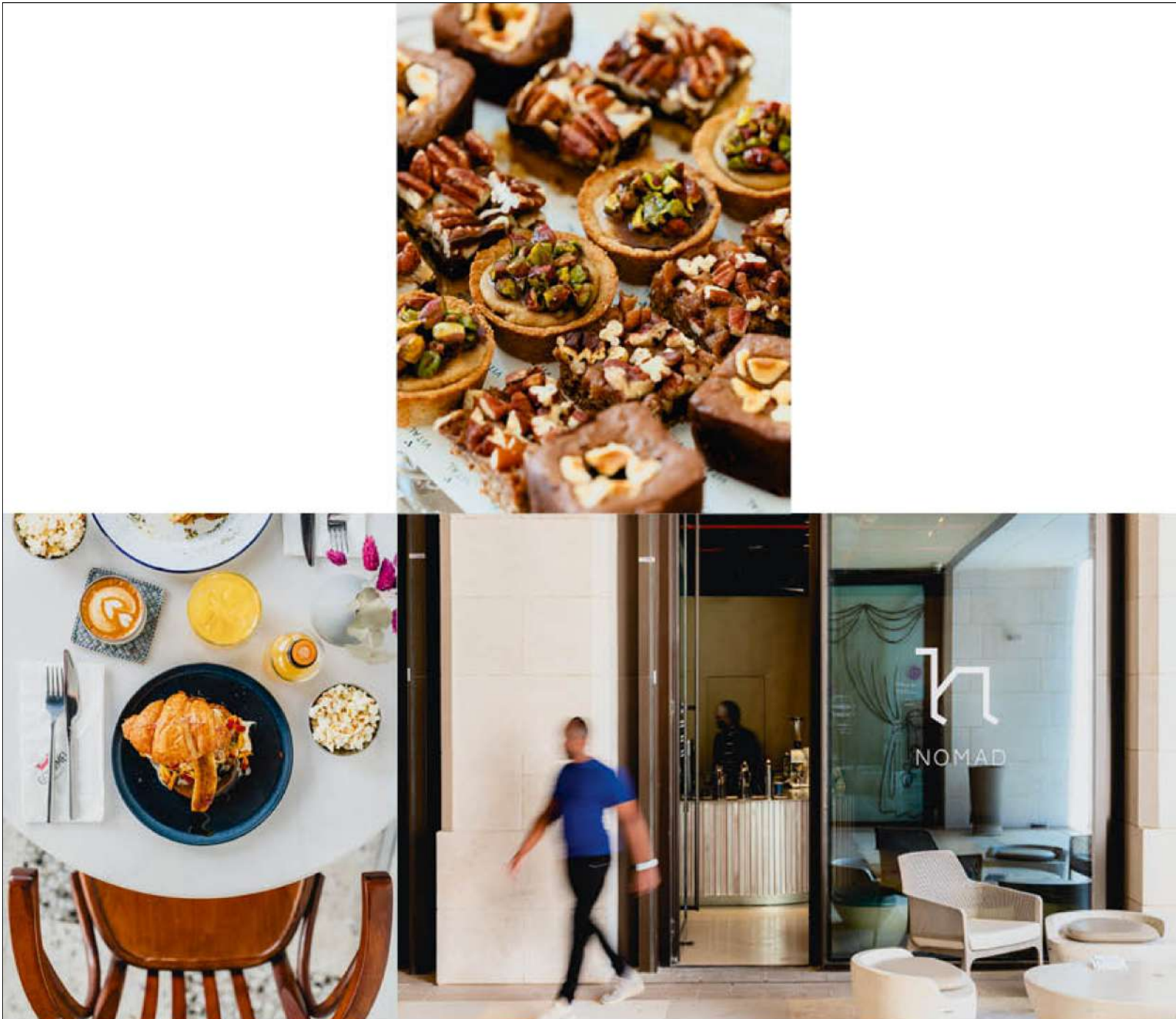
PHOTOGRAPHS BY ANDREW URWIN





From left: Blended Café;
sweet treats at Torba Farmers
Market. Below, from left:
barista Nicholas Kangethe
at Nomad; Elba Saffron at
Desert Rose Café; coffee
truck at Torba Farmers
Market; lunch at Go Home;
entrance to Nomad; colourful
interior at Thalatheen





AT FIRST GLANCE, DOHA APPEARS BRAND NEW, WITH ITS futuristic skyline and countless five-star hotels. Most of the global luxury brands are here and, as in many major cities, you can score a table at restaurants such as Nobu and Hakkasan. But there's also another side to the country. Take the time to get to know it and there's a warm Qatari welcome to be found. Believe me, it's worth the effort.

When I moved here nearly 16 years ago to work as an editor at a daily newspaper, the one thing I thought I knew for certain was what the food would be like – an impression I'd based on a short stint in Dubai and food-focused holidays in Lebanon, Jordan and Egypt. I realised how wrong I was when a Qatari colleague invited me for dinner and we sat together on the floor of her home, eating with our hands from a platter laden with basmati rice and perfectly cooked lamb, full of delicious yet unfamiliar flavours. It led me to purposely seek out local cuisine early on, wanting to discover food from the many communities that have made Qatar home over the centuries.

When friends visit, our first stop is always Bayt Sharq, in the renovated century-old Al Khulaini family home by the seaside. The children and grandchildren of the original owner have created a warm, welcoming restaurant, spread across sunny courtyards shaded by trees, and flanked by arcades lined with benches decked in sadu fabric. Every meal starts with the traditional welcome of dates and tiny

cups of strong Arabic coffee scented with cardamom, known as qahwa. While the menu occasionally makes a detour into regional Arabic and Indian cuisine, this is very much a place to try real Qatari food.

Nakhi – a spiced chickpea stew – is scooped up in flaky flatbread fresh from the tandoor oven; peep into the kitchen and the chefs will theatrically demonstrate how they make it. For something more substantial, order the fried hamour fish, a taste of the country's maritime past. But for a dish close to all Qatari hearts, the machboos is a must-try. Chicken, lamb or local seafood is steeped in the restaurant's signature marinade (a family secret), roasted and served on a bed of rice flavoured with tomatoes, cumin, cinnamon and limes. For sweetness, dried fruit is added; for salty-sourness, laban strained yogurt.

Founder of Blended Café, Noor Al Mazroei, is one of the country's most prominent chefs and believes the simplicity of Qatari food is the key to its success. 'We don't mix lots of ingredients in our dishes, so the flavours are always clean, fresh and light,' she says. Common ingredients include cumin, coriander seeds, ginger powder and cinnamon; particular spice blends give depth and are often closely guarded secrets.

The very best place to buy spices is Souq Waqif, Doha's central market. When I first arrived it was in the process of an extensive rejuvenation, yet despite the changes, tradition remains at its heart. Alongside restaurants and cafés, small shops sell cooking utensils, including oversized ladles and huge metal platters for the lamb and camel dishes served at large gatherings. Come nightfall, the souq's main artery pulses with energy and is packed with local families, friends who gather for dinner or shisha, and tourists whose senses are dazzled by the array of sights, scents and sounds.

Many of the merchants here are connected to families who have been importing spices for generations. Cumin, saffron and pepper are sold by the gram; curls of cinnamon bark, loomi (dried limes) and masala mixes can all be vacuum packed to take home. As you wander, keep an eye out for the ladies who set up their stalls in the souq's open courtyards and make samosas stuffed with lamb or cheese, and luqaimat dough balls in honey – delicious street-food snacks that cost just a few riyals.

Qatar's shores have long welcomed visitors. Some have come to trade, others – like me – have made a life here. All have brought new ingredients and techniques and contributed to the food culture of both the desert-dwelling Bedouin and coastal inhabitants. As well as spices, items such as European beef and tandoor ovens from India have also left an indelible influence on the 'typical' national food. 'Qataris prefer to eat local food at home, so my aim is to introduce it to expats and visitors,' says Khalid Al

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Clockwise from far left: sign at Blended Café; minimalist architecture at Torba Farmers Market; founder Ghanim AlSulaiti of Thalatheen; upholstered stools, founder Fatma Al Kuwari, and freshly picked vegetables, all at Torba Farmers Market; green juice at Thalatheen; avocado toast at Thalatheen; avocado toast at Blended Café





Clockwise from left: lab-like coffee brewing at Nomad; Desert Rose Café at the National Museum of Qatar; banana bread at Thalatheen; shopping displays, and neon sign at Go Home

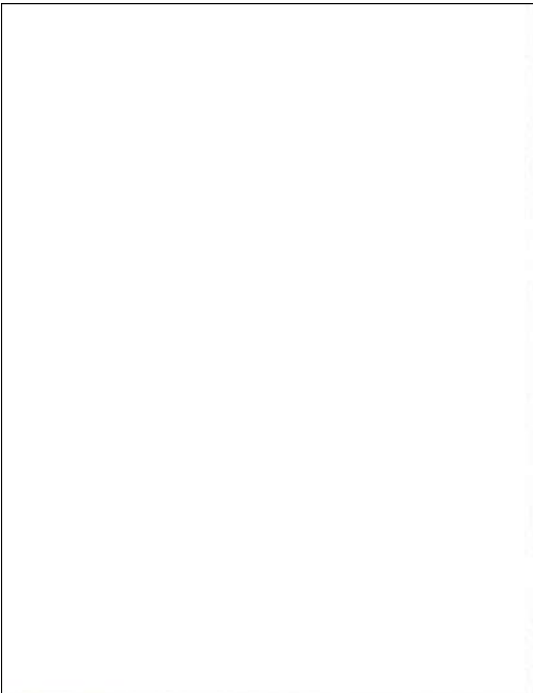


Reyes, founder of popular health-food restaurant Go Home Café in Msheireb Downtown Doha. His contemporary versions of Qatari dishes include a shakshuka with layers of egg, tomato and a creamy sauce.

The Msheireb neighbourhood is in Doha's original commercial district and connected to Souq Waqif by an underground passage. It's the city's newest cultural hub and on its pedestrian-friendly streets are pizzerias, ramen bars and bustling coffee shops – as well as some of the best places to try modern Qatari cuisine. Saasna, a sleek spot on Barahat Msheireb, offers a menu of classics developed by chef and cookbook author Sheikha Ahmad Almeir. Meat-eaters should try badawi (which translates as 'Bedouin' as well as 'rustic' in Arabic) – chunks of marinated mutton cooked slowly in turmeric, cinnamon, cloves and dried chili, served with basmati rice and flatbreads. Desserts include a version of balaleet, a local breakfast favourite – sweetened vermicelli noodles in a saffron-accented omelette, drenched in honey. It's also possible to try a rare gem if your timing is right: faggah, Qatar's desert truffle, in season from November to







*Clockwise from left:
coffee truck in Msheireb
Downtown Doha; outdoor
dining at Torba Farmers
Market; Société madeleines;
Cup of Joe sign; shawarma
at Thalatheen; chef Noor
Al Mazroei of Blended Café;
Thalatheen interior; vintage
gramophone at Go Home;
avocado on sourdough toast
at Thalatheen*



LEGEND HAS IT THAT FAGGAH, QATAR'S DESERT
TRUFFLE, SPRINGS FROM THE SANDS WHEN
LIGHTNING HITS THE GROUND DURING STORMS





February, simply sautéed in butter. Legend has it that faggah springs from the sands when lightning hits the desert during storms; the more prosaic explanation is that it grows up through the cracks that open in the hard, sandy earth after rainfall.

On weekends, Msheireb has also been hosting Torba Farmers Market, Qatar's first farm-to-fork set-up, founded by entrepreneur Fatma Al Kuwari. It burst on to the scene in 2017 with a mission to restore the lost connection between Qataris and the origins of their food. At the two locations, Msheireb and the original site in suburban Education City, visitors have been rubbing shoulders with locals buying organic vegetables, sourdough bread and all kinds of baked goods, locally roasted coffee, artisan chocolate and other products such as skincare. 'At the beginning we really struggled because this focus on being sustainable and organic was so new,' says Al Kuwari. 'Now it's not just about the food; it's a platform for our community, for connecting people, and for supporting those businesses and initiatives that want to do more and make a change.' Up to 5,000 people a day have been visiting the markets each weekend, and it's here that you can really see Qatar's emerging food scene in action.

This enthusiasm for local and organic produce exists alongside a steadily growing appetite for fusion cuisine. Jiwan, on the fourth floor of the National Museum of Qatar, has uninterrupted views across the Corniche – but don't let that distract you from the food, which is sublime. The menu was overseen by French Michelin-maestro Alain Ducasse, who uses Qatari ingredients in dishes that are a heady combination of old and new. The beloved salona vegetable stew, for example, has been reworked with the addition of chicken, served with a tangy rice spiked with dried lime, a popular staple.

Then there's Smat ('dining table' in the Gulf Arabic dialect), a short hop from the museum. Here, flamboyant Kuwait-based chef Fawaz Al Omairi (also known as Timsah, or crocodile in Arabic – a reference to his favourite clothing brand) does everything with a twist. Thareed lasagne is a reinterpretation of a Qatari dish of lamb cooked with vegetables and flatbread. The Smat version layers the bread with pulled beef ribs and vegetables, all covered with a béchamel sauce. The regional favourite biryani is also given a Wellington-style revamp with dried-fruit-studded rice, served with a lamb shank encased in puff pastry.

All in all, it's a far cry from the food I thought I would find when I first arrived in the country. And like the place itself, it continually evolves while keeping tradition close to its heart. Those, like me, who set out to find the best Qatari cuisine are in for an exciting journey. 🌱



THE VIEW FROM HERE

HEAD FOR THE SANDS TO EXPERIENCE ELEMENTAL ART ON A MONUMENTAL SCALE

STEELY RESOLVE

Out in Qatar's far western desert is a public artwork that will have you rubbing your eyes, wondering if you're seeing a mirage. Spanning just under a mile is a quartet of steel plates each over 45 feet tall, reminiscent of the monolith in *2001: A Space Odyssey*. They soar from the ground like oversized classroom rulers above the grainy sands of the Brouq Nature Reserve, about an hour and a half's drive from Doha. This is *East-West/West-East* by Richard Serra, the American sculptor known for his conceptual manipulation of space. After they were manufactured in Germany and erected in their new home in 2014, eight years of desert exposure and intense summer temperatures have oxidised the surfaces and turned the steel from grey to burnt sienna, smooth to rough. There are no signs leading here. You just have to get in your four-wheel drive and trust the GPS coordinates: N250 31.019° E050051.948. NICOLA CHILTON



PHOTOGRAPH: JACK JOHNS

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