



In This Issue

[Featured Article](#)

[Brenda's View](#)

[Visiting and Working
in Qatar](#)

April, 2011

Dear Guest,

We are pleased to deliver our April electronic newsletter! This month we are focusing on Qatar, a remarkably modern and successful Emirate.

A Letter From Our President

There are many new things going on at PALS. Be sure to "Like" our [Facebook page](#) so that you can get updates, news stories and interesting cultural facts on a regular basis.

As it seems like neither winter nor this recession have been quick to release us from their collective grip, I wanted to share some information with you about Qatar - a place where it is always warm and a place that boasts the strongest economic growth and lowest unemployment in the world. We at PALS were fortunate to recently work with a delightful English as a Second Language student from Qatar. Through him we learned a great deal about this desert Emirate. Qatar is well known for its economic and technological development as well as the warm hospitality of its people.



At 4,448 square miles, Qatar is roughly the size of the US state of Connecticut. It is a peninsula in the Persian Gulf and borders Saudi Arabia. It is largely a desert, oil producing nation, however, desalination plants have provided for recent growth in the agricultural sector. Thirty percent of the Gross Domestic Product derives from oil. Qatar has the highest GDP per capita in the world at over \$145,300 (compared to \$47,400 in the US). Qatar is also unique in that its expatriate population outnumbers Qatari nationals. Approximately three quarters of the inhabitants of Qatar are NOT Qataris, they are Pakistani, Iraqi, Iranian, Filipino as well as many other nationalities. There are also three times more men in Qatar than women due to the large expatriate population.

Qatar's history dates back over 8,000 years. Its most recent historical milestone was gaining independence from Great Britain in 1971. This Emirate, currently ruled by the Al Thani family, has a conservative, largely Muslim, population. They are relatively modern in many ways and fairly traditional in others. Both men and women favor traditional dress and both are extremely conscious about their grooming and appearance. Qatari men are nearly always impeccably dressed and many frequent barbershops for professional shaves and skin treatments. Women are legally allowed to dress as they wish, however, modesty is highly favored and most Qatari women prefer to wear at least a head scarf (hijab), and a large number opt to wear traditional Abbayah which covers head to toe.

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Featured Article



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Qatar plays an important role regionally and around the world. It is home to the Al Jazeera (الجزيرة) television station which is rapidly gaining viewers across the globe. Qatar hosted the 2006 Asian Games and is now scheduled to host the 2022 FIFA World Cup. I have added Qatar to my list of places I hope to visit one day. Its rich culture, booming economy and welcoming population make it a great place to visit and to do business.

Brenda Arbelaiz

Visiting and Working in Qatar:

The work day starts quite early in Qatar. Do not be surprised by 7AM meetings! In summer, many businesses close between noon and 4pm to escape the oppressive heat - often over 115F.

Although it is changing slowly, men and women do not generally display any affection publicly. Men, however, will hold hands with each other when walking as a sign of friendship and Qatari men will kiss each other on the cheeks as a greeting. Handshakes and direct eye contact are also very important parts of greetings.

To avoid misunderstandings or potential embarrassment, topics like sex, religion, politics and one's wife should be avoided; however, Qataris love to talk about food, football and their children.

If you're dining with a Qatari, don't expose the bottoms of your feet to him/her and don't eat with your left hand since the left hand is seen as the 'dirty hand'. Similarly, don't attempt to shake hands or give them a package with your left hand.

If your Qatari friend insists on buying you something-a meal or a gift-let him! Qataris are extremely hospitable, and typically there are no strings attached. It is generally a custom to argue for the bill.

Always politely refuse the first offer of food. Don't worry; your host will vigorously persuade you to partake. However, even if you don't want anything to eat, it is probably best to eat a small amount. At the very least, you will be expected to have a drink, likely tea or fruit juice. Leaving a small amount of food on your plate when you are finished with a meal is polite.



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