



## SPECIAL REPORT

### 2022 Soccer Tournament - Qatar

Date: 5 October 2022

Qatar will be hosting the world's largest soccer tournament from 20 November-18 December 2022. The tournament will be held in eight stadiums in Qatar, all situated within a 55 km (35 mi) radius of the capital Doha. The final championship game is expected to take place in Lusail Stadium, located approximately 20 km (12 mi) from central Doha.

### Security Issues

**Entry Requirements:** All foreign travelers seeking entry into Qatar must show proof of a negative COVID-19 PCR test that is no more than 48 hours old at the time of arrival or a Rapid Antigen Test (RAT) that is no more than 24 hours old at the time of arrival, regardless of their vaccination status. Travelers must also register on the [Ehteraz website](#) and upload all pertinent documents before arrival. Travelers are required to download and activate the Ehteraz app (separate from the website) on arrival. Individuals who test positive for COVID-19 while in Qatar will be required to self-isolate for seven days and take a RAT at an authorized location on day seven. If the test is negative, the traveler may leave quarantine. If positive, the traveler must quarantine until day 10, after which they may cease quarantining with no further restrictions or tests. Face masks are required on public transportation and in medical facilities. Violators may be fined or imprisoned. Additional information regarding entry restrictions is available [here](#).

Effective from 1 November-23 December, all travelers to Qatar must [obtain a digital Hayya Card](#), whether they attend the soccer matches or not. Exceptions will only be made for residents, Qatari citizens and Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) citizens with Qatari IDs. The Hayya Card will serve a dual purpose as a multiple entry permit to the country and a stadium access pass. Hayya Card holders will also have free access to public transportation from 10 November-23 December. Hayya Card holders will be able to enter and leave Qatar freely or remain in the country until 23 January 2023. Tournament ticket holders may also link their Hayya Card to allow up to three non-ticketed travelers to enter Qatar with them. Children under the age of 12 may be added for free. All other individuals traveling via linked invitation to another's Hayya Card must pay a fee of 500 Qatari riyals (137 U.S. dollars). International travelers are required to validate their accommodations through the Hayya portal to receive their Hayya Card. While all visitors to Qatar during this period are required to possess a card whether they attend matches or not, at this time international travelers must produce a match ticket to be approved for a digital Hayya Card. Qatari authorities note that closer to the tournament it may be possible to obtain a Hayya Card without a match ticket.

**Infrastructure:** Infrastructure problems -- particularly those related to traffic, food, and accommodation issues -- are likely to affect travelers to Qatar during the soccer tournament. Approximately 1.2 million people, equivalent to roughly half of the country's population, are expected to visit the city of Doha during the 29-day tournament. On any given day, at least 400,000 additional visitors may be in Doha. The Qatar Accommodation Agency (QAA) -- the official group responsible for accommodations for the tournament -- aims to provide 100,000-130,000 beds per night during the time period, a number far short of the expected requirement for the 400,000 individuals who may be in the city at any given time. The QAA is

attempting to secure apartments, shipping containers and cruise ship cabins, and to construct desert camps for travelers. Many such accommodations may be sub-par; the shipping containers and desert camps in particular may not even offer the most basic of amenities, including indoor plumbing. Additionally, while authorities are likely attempting to construct infrastructure to feed those attending the games, any such infrastructure may be makeshift. Food quantity and quality are likely to be issues as well.

**Crime:** Petty, opportunistic crime is the security concern that is most likely to affect short-term travelers to Doha. Such incidents are particularly likely at the city's souqs (markets). While more serious crimes occasionally affect foreigners in Doha, such criminal incidents generally take place in areas of the city where foreign labor camps are located. Sexual harassment and assault are also concerns in Qatar. The large number of expected travelers is likely to increase the incidence of sexual harassment as well as that of petty crime during the tournament, which takes place from 20 November to 18 December.

**Demonstrations:** Demonstrations occur infrequently in Qatar as a whole, including in Doha. When such actions do take place, they are usually inspired by regional developments, are typically small and conclude peacefully. Qatari authorities require prior authorization for rallies, and security officers usually closely monitor demonstrations to prevent disturbances and/or disruptions. Demonstrations have occurred as a result of preparations for the upcoming matches. The protests were largely conducted by workers and security guards to demand their wages be paid. Protesters blocked roads and entrances to their labor camps. However, the government of Qatar swiftly paid the wages and promised to hold contractors accountable for their legal obligations. Though the government has acted quickly to deal with such protests, the possibility of further, small-scale demonstrations cannot be ruled out in the lead-up to the tournament.

**Terrorism:** While there has not been a terrorist attack in Qatar since 2005, the country -- including the city of Doha -- remains a potential terrorist target due to its large U.S. military presence, along with large numbers of Western nationals. The large number of expected travelers, the serving of alcohol and the popular nature of the event generally increase the likelihood of an attack. However, UnitedHealthcare Global is aware of no information indicating that such an attack is planned or imminent.

## Airports

### Hamad International Airport (OTHH/DOH)

Hamad International Airport, which opened in 2014, is Qatar's newest airport. The airport's longest hard surface runway is constructed of asphalt, designated 16L/34R and measures 4,849 x 60 m (15,910 x 197 ft). Both the airport and control towers are operational 24 hours a day. The facility can accommodate 3,700 arriving travelers and 4,200 departing travelers every hour.

The local police force provides security at this facility. Police personnel guard the entry points, and airport ID cards are necessary to gain access. The one-terminal facility serves as the country's primary commercial airport. In anticipation of the upcoming soccer tournament, a passenger terminal expansion project is due to be completed later in October 2022.

### Doha International Airport (OTBD/DIA)

The Qatari Civil Aviation Authority recently reopened Doha International Airport -- which had been closed to commercial traffic since 2014 -- to commercial flights to accommodate increased air traffic for the tournament. As of 15 September, at least 13 airlines shifted operations to Doha International Airport. The changes are effective until 30 December. Doha International Airport has been recently refurbished and can accommodate 2,000 arriving travelers and 2,000 departing travelers each hour.

There are three terminals at Doha International Airport, including a VIP terminal and a ministerial terminal used by government personnel. Corporate aircraft can use the VIP terminal as long as arrangements are made in advance of arrival; at this terminal, passengers are transported via private vehicles from the aircraft to the building while crew members are usually transported via coach. Once at the terminal, crew members and passengers clear passport and customs control. All baggage is X-rayed upon arrival and is subject to inspection to intercept contraband items, such as alcohol, drugs and pornographic material. The local police force provides security at this facility. Police personnel guard the entry points, and airport ID cards are necessary to gain access. Aircraft are parked according to availability of positions on the parking apron.

## Transportation

Hamad International Airport is located approximately 15 km (9 mi) southwest of central Doha, a drive of about 15 minutes depending upon traffic conditions. Doha International Airport is located about 10 km southeast of the city center; the drive between this airport and the city center is approximately 20 minutes depending on traffic conditions.

Doha has a robust public transportation system, which includes taxis and buses. Taxis are blue (usually two-toned shades of blue). Although taxis are metered, travelers should note that drivers do not turn on the meter when traveling from and to the airport and instead charge a fixed fare.

In response to accommodation issues, many groups are opting to stay in hotels or other accommodations in Dubai or Saudi Arabia and travel to and from Qatar on a daily basis. Qatari authorities are preparing for this eventuality; nonetheless, those transiting the border during the games should be aware of the likelihood of high levels of traffic congestion and long waits in both directions. Travelers should also note that in an attempt to reduce traffic congestion within Doha during the tournament, authorities will close roads in specific locations across the city from 1 November-31 December; however, this will likely significantly increase congestion in other areas across the city.

## Recommendations

- Travelers should be circumspect in their topics of conversation: criticism of the Qatari government is illegal and may be prosecuted.
- Some medications are banned in Qatar. Please see the list [here](#) for reference. Travelers carrying any kind of medication into the country are strongly advised to also carry a copy of their prescription with them.
- Travelers should avoid the vicinity of foreign labor camps in Doha due to a higher likelihood of crime near those camps.
- Travelers should avoid wearing clothing that bears Western or corporate affiliations or other badges of nationality.
- Dust and sandstorms occur frequently in Qatar. Visitors should always be mindful of weather conditions and should always carry a covering/handkerchief to protect themselves in the event of a storm.
- Alcoholic beverages can only be consumed in approved locations in Qatar. Openly carrying alcoholic beverages and public drunkenness can result in severe penalties, including incarceration.
- On stadium grounds, alcohol purchase and consumption will only occur at approved times and locations. Times are likely to be shortly before and after matches, and only between the stadium ticketing area and seating itself; however, these arrangements have not been finalized yet. Travelers should keep informed of local rules as the event approaches.

- Western travelers should be circumspect in behavior and should avoid making statements that may have political implications.
- Tap water is generally safe for consumption in Qatar, including in Doha.

### **Cultural Tips**

- Arabic is the official language. English is commonly used as a second language.
- Qatari law is influenced by Islamic legal codes (Shariah). Authorities rigidly enforce prohibitions against pork, liquor, licentious reading material and many types of social behavior including public displays of affection. Travelers should show sensitivity to these laws, otherwise they risk arrest.
- It is legal to practice religions other than Islam in Qatar; however, it is illegal to proselytize.
- Homosexuality is illegal in Qatar and punishable by sentences of up to seven years in prison. LGBT travelers should maintain as low a profile as possible and avoid disclosing their status to authorities.
- It is impolite to refuse coffee and/or food offered by hosts. It is also impolite to walk in front of someone who is praying.
- Travelers should remove their shoes before entering a mosque.
- It is an insult to show the sole of the foot or to point it at a person, even inadvertently (e.g., while crossing legs).
- Always receive and pass items with both hands or with the right hand, not with the left one alone.
- Some public areas have dress codes that require men and women to cover knees, shoulders, and stomachs. In such areas, leggings may be required to be covered by a long shirt or dress.
- Female visitors should dress conservatively and turn down offers to sit in the front seats of taxis. Women should avoid using taxis alone at night. Such behaviors will diminish, but not eliminate, the risk of sexual harassment.
- Physical contact (even a handshake) between members of the opposite sex is considered inappropriate in Qatar. When greeting someone of the opposite sex, the protocol is to place one's right hand over one's heart as a sign of respect.
- Foreign women have reported isolated cases of harassment by locals. While conservative dress will not prevent unwanted advances, it is recommended in deference to local norms. In general, women should avoid wearing tight or revealing clothing. Although female visitors are not required to wear the abaya -- the traditional full-length coat worn by conservative Muslim women -- many visitors wear the abaya and cover their head in deference to local norms.

### **Questions? Comments?**

*Contact UnitedHealth Group's Intelligence team directly at [intelligence@uhcglobal.com](mailto:intelligence@uhcglobal.com) or call + (1-713) 430-7300 and ask to speak to a representative for the Intelligence Department.*