

Qatar announces easier entry for cruise passengers as 32 ships head to Doha port

Destination prepares to offer seamless tourist experience to over 50,000 passengers this season

DOHA, QATAR, September 22, 2016 /EINPresswire.com/ -- With a large number of cruise passengers expected to arrive at the country's ports, Qatar Tourism Authority (QTA), in co-ordination with the Ministry of Interior and Qatar Ports Management Company – Mwani Qatar, have announced new measures to facilitate their disembarkation and entry for a seamless tourism experience.



Officials from the three entities have

confirmed that, thanks to enhanced technology and close collaboration between cruise operators and security officials, cruise passengers will be able to disembark within minutes and begin enjoying their on-shore excursions.

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*Hassan Al Ibrahim, Chief
Tourism Development Officer,
QTA*

As part of the new operating procedure, a passenger manifest containing passport details of passengers and crew will be shared with immigration officials 48 hours in advance of the ship's arrival in Qatar. This will allow immigration officials to process all relevant information and clear passengers for entry before the ship berths.

In addition, QTA and the Ministry of Interior have confirmed that cruise passengers, due to the short duration of the stay, will be eligible for transit visas, which will further ease their entry into the country.

According to Hassan Al Ibrahim, Chief Tourism Development Officer at QTA, the new procedures have been introduced in anticipation of significant increases in the number of cruise passengers. While Qatar has previously welcomed smaller ships carrying less than a thousand passengers, the coming season will be the first to witness the arrival of larger ships with over 1,500 passengers on board. The MSC Fantasia will be the first “mega-ship” to arrive in Qatar. It will dock in December with an expected 3,900 passengers and 1,500 crew-members on board.

“Cruise Tourism forms an important part of our strategy to increase the number of visitor arrivals to Qatar. That is why we are placing great emphasis on streamlining all processes related to cruise as well as developing the sector's capacity to welcome a large number of passengers,” commented Al

Ibrahim. "Studies show that once tourists have had a taste of a destination that they visited on a cruise, they are likely to return for a longer visit later, giving us further impetus to focus our strategy for the next two years on this important sub-sector of tourism."

He added, "Cruise passengers currently spend eight hours on average during their stops in Qatar, so it is important to minimise the time spent on formalities on the day of their visit. We are grateful to the Ministry of Interior for their initiative and support in implementing a solution that will ensure our visitors get the most out of their visit without compromising on our nation's security."

Director General of General Directorate of Nationality, Borders and Expatriates Affairs, Brigadier Abdullah Salim Al-Ali, commented, "The Ministry of Interior always strives to facilitate government services while maintaining the utmost vigilance and security, for the sake of visitors and residents. The revised process for the entry of cruise passengers will enhance our visitors' experience in Qatar while giving us more time to process information thoroughly using the passenger manifest, which will arrive 48 hours before the ship is due to dock."

The announcement comes as QTA and the Ministry of Interior step up efforts to facilitate entry for tourists in a bid to increase visitor arrivals into the country. Qatari officials recently signed an agreement with VFS Global that will soon allow for a fast-tracked and transparent tourist visa application process.

Thirty-two ships carrying over 50,000 passengers are expected to arrive in Qatar this cruise season, which continues until April 2017. The first ship of the season is expected to dock on October 18th at the Doha Port in the heart of Qatar's capital.

Meanwhile, QTA is continuing to work with destination management companies and tour guides to ensure cruise passengers receive a warm welcome and enjoy an authentic Qatari experience during their stays. Tour guides have received intensive training on the management of large tour groups and effective communications about the destination.

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