

New transit visa rules make visiting Qatar easier

DOHA, QATAR, September 26, 2016 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The Ministry of Interior, Qatar Airways, and Qatar Tourism Authority are working together to expand free transit visa stays in Qatar from 48 hours to 96 hours. Nearly 30 million annual Qatar Airways passengers can then more easily plan a Doha stopover. The UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) Secretary General said this new scheme is a significant change and will result in an increase of visitors to Qatar.

Qatar Tourism Authority, Qatar Airways and Qatar's Ministry of Interior



announced today a revised tourism visa scheme available to passengers transiting through Doha in a move to promote Qatar as a world-class stopover destination.

The new transit visa structure now allows passengers with a minimum transit time of five hours in Hamad International Airport, to stay in Qatar for up to 96 hours (four days), without the requirement to apply ahead of time for an entry visa.

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Qatar Airways Group Chief Executive, His Excellency Mr. Akbar Al Baker

This is a significant increase from the previous transit visa scheme, which allowed travelers with a minimum layover of eight hours to spend a maximum of 48 hours (two days) in Qatar. This increase is designed to make stopovers easier and more attractive to Qatar Airways' global passengers, and aims to deliver additional value to the local economy while strengthening Qatar's position as an attractive tourist destination.

The Qatar transit visa is free of charge and available on arrival at Hamad International Airport to passengers of all

nationalities, upon confirmation of onward journey and completion of passport control procedures. All visas are approved and issued at the sole discretion of the Ministry of Interior.

Qatar Airways Group Chief Executive, His Excellency Mr. Akbar Al Baker, said: “Qatar Airways serves millions of people from around the world as they journey across our network of more than 150 destinations. Whether traveling for business or leisure, we want to enrich the journey of all of our passengers and are restructuring our fares to reflect this initiative and to promote stopovers to travelers. We are excited to offer our passengers the opportunity to taste the cultural highlights that the city of Doha and the State of Qatar have to offer. We are thankful to the Ministry of Interior and the

Qatar Tourism Authority for helping us to create a journey that includes discovering Qatar, an experience that will stay in their hearts and minds forever.”

The development, announced on the eve of World Tourism Day, is the third in a series of enhancements that Qatar has made to facilitate entry into the country for visitors. Last week, officials announced a new process to quicken the entry of tourists arriving on board cruise ships, and earlier, representatives signed an agreement with VFS Global, which will see the development of a new, faster and more transparent tourist visa application mechanism.

UNWTO Secretary-General Taleb Rifai commended Qatar on its rapid advancement in this area. “Promoting visa facilitation is a priority for tourism development worldwide and a key element in the competitiveness of tourism destinations. We congratulate Qatar for announcing, very auspiciously on the occasion of the World Tourism Day, a new milestone change in the country’s transit visa scheme,” he said. “This is the third significant travel facilitation announcement from Qatar in the space of just one month. We are very pleased to see that the work conducted by UNWTO with Qatar on visa facilitation is yielding results and trust that these will certainly result in an increase of visitors to Qatar.”

Director General of the General Directorate of Nationality, Borders and Expatriates Affairs in the Ministry of Interior, Brigadier Abdullah Salim Al-Ali, said: “The Ministry of Interior strives to support the country’s growth and development, while maintaining security for all visitors and residents. We are pleased to further facilitate the movement of the 30 million passengers who pass through Hamad International Airport every year. We welcome them to spend time in Doha and discover Qatari hospitality.”

Qatar Tourism Authority’s Chief Tourism Development Officer, Mr. Hassan Al Ibrahim, said: “By offering an enhanced transit visa to passengers travelling through Hamad International Airport, Qatar is providing its visitors a welcoming experience from the moment their planes touch down in Doha until they begin their onward journeys to their final destinations. And, as we celebrate World Tourism Day’s Tourism for All theme, we are delighted to make Qatar more accessible to people from around the world and invite them to discover our country, our cultural heritage and our natural treasures.”

The introduction of a new transit visa scheme is also a step towards positioning Doha as a turn-around port for cruise ships, Al Ibrahim added, noting that in the near future international cruise passengers could fly to Qatar, enter using a transit visa, and begin and end their cruise in Doha. “This will increase the length of stay in Qatar of a growing segment of visitors, and allow them to further explore our country’s tourism offering, while increasing the economic impact of cruise tourism,” he commented.

To maximize on their transit through Qatar, visitors can explore Discover Qatar stopover packages offered by Qatar Airways Holidays. These include, desert safaris, city tours, visits to Katara Cultural Village, Souq Waqif and The Pearl-Qatar island, museum and art gallery visits, architectural tours, and hotel bookings.

All visas are approved and issued at the sole discretion of the Ministry of Interior. To learn more about Qatar as a destination, visit <https://discoverqatar.qatarairways.com> and www.visitqatar.qa

Qatar transit visa:

Previous transit visa requirements -

Minimum transit time to be eligible: 8 hours

Maximum stay: 48 hours

New transit visa requirements -
Minimum transit time to be eligible: 5 hours
Maximum stay: 96 hours

About Qatar Airways:

Qatar Airways, the national carrier of the State of Qatar, is one of the fastest growing airlines operating one of the youngest fleets in the world. Now in its 19th year of operations, Qatar Airways has a modern fleet of 190 aircraft flying to more than 150 key business and leisure destinations across six continents.

A multiple award-winning airline, Qatar Airways was awarded World's Best Business Class; Best Business Class Airline Lounge and Best Airline Staff Service in the Middle East at the prestigious 2016 World Airline Awards managed by international air transport rating organization Skytrax.

Qatar Airways is a member of the oneworld global alliance. The award-winning alliance was named the World's Best Airline Alliance 2015 by Skytrax for the third year running. Qatar Airways was the first Gulf carrier to join global airline alliance, oneworld, enabling its passengers to benefit from more than 1,000 airports in more than 150 countries, with 14,250 daily departures.

Oryx One, Qatar Airways' inflight entertainment system offers passengers up to 3,000 entertainment options from the latest blockbuster movies, TV box sets, music, games and much more. Passengers flying on Qatar Airways flights served by its B787, A350, A380, A319 as well as select A320 and A330 aircraft can also stay in touch with their friends and family around the world by using the award-winning airline's on-board Wi-Fi and GSM service.

Qatar Airways is one of the world's leaders in sponsoring global sporting events, including the strategic team sponsorships of FC Barcelona and Al-Ahli Saudi Arabia FC. Qatar Airways' strategy reflects the values of sports as a means of bringing people together, something at the core of the airline's own brand message - Going Places Together.

Qatar Airways Cargo, the world's third largest cargo carrier, serves more than 50 exclusive freighter destinations worldwide via its Doha hub and also delivers freight to more than 150 key business and leisure destinations globally on 190 aircraft. The Qatar Airways Cargo fleet now includes eight Airbus 330Fs, 10 Boeing 777 freighters and two Boeing 747 freighters.

About Qatar Tourism Authority (QTA)

Long-recognized by the country's leadership as an avenue to further Qatar's development, tourism has been designated a priority sector by the government. Qatar Tourism Authority's mission is to firmly establish Qatar on the global map as a world-class tourism destination with deep cultural roots. In 2014 QTA launched the Qatar National Tourism Sector Strategy (QNTSS), which seeks to diversify the country's tourism offering and increase the sector's contribution to Qatar's economy by 2030.

QTA works in partnership with public and private stakeholders to achieve this mission by planning, regulating and promoting a sustainable and diverse tourism industry.

As part of its planning efforts, QTA identifies types of tourism products and services that will contribute to the Qatar tourism experience, and works to attract investment for their development.

Regulation efforts involve ensuring tourism sector establishments operate at the highest standards while perpetuating Qatar's culture.

QTA promotes Qatar as a destination around the world, through its destination branding, international representation and participation at trade shows, and by developing a rich calendar of festivals and events. With a growing international presence, QTA's representative offices in London, Paris, Berlin, Milan, Singapore, Istanbul, New York and Riyadh support QTA's promotion efforts.

Since launching QNTSS, Qatar has welcomed over 7 million visitors, and achieved an average annual growth in arrivals of 11.5% between 2010-2015. The economic impact of the tourism sector in Qatar is becoming increasingly visible with 2014 estimates showing a total impact on Qatar's total GDP of 4.1%.

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