

cultural Doha

Once a centre for pearl diving, Doha is now one of the world's richest and friendliest cities, filled with souqs, stunning architecture and more, says **Martin Steady**

Day 1: Coasting along

Morning: Doha's Corniche consists of five miles of landscaped waterfront overlooking the Arabian Gulf and it's the best place to get your bearings, take a stroll with the locals and watch the world go by.

An excellent hop-on, hop-off bus service covers most of the main tourist sites in the Qatari capital and a great place to start it from is the famous Souq Waqif. Here, stalls are laden with spices, jewellery, cakes, clothing – even birds of prey. There are plenty of authentic Arab cafes to take a break at for some refreshing aromatic tea or bitter Arabic coffee and, of course, dates from the surrounding desert.

Afternoon: Head north to The Pearl, an island attached to the Qatari

peninsula that was built on reclaimed land but is now almost a city in itself. Packed with designer stores and deluxe apartments (available to foreign nationals) it is divided into twelve districts.

Find Porto Arabia, which is the primary harbour with an almost two-mile-long seafront promenade - La Croisette. Blend in with the locals, and sip from the seemingly endless options of soft drinks and mocktails.

Evening: Dine aboard a traditional Qatari dhow. A cruise on one of these traditional wooden boats is the best way to take in the impressive, glittering Doha skyline, which includes iconic buildings like the cylindrical Burj Doha with its intricately patterned steel facade.



THE CORNICHE AND A DHOW



SOUQ WAQIF



THE PEARL



NATIONAL MUSEUM OF QATAR

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Day 2: Soak up cultural Qatar

Morning: Katara Cultural Village is the largest and most multi-dimensional cultural project of Qatar (Katara being the ancient name for Qatar). This sleek, open-air complex has a huge amphitheatre, plenty of restaurants, shops and cafes and a beach to relax on.

Afternoon: At the end of Doha's famous Corniche, built on a projecting peninsula, is the unmissable Museum Of Islamic Art. Designed by the famous I. M. Pei the striking building contains the world's most complete collection of Islamic artefacts from three continents over the last 1,400 years. Process the wonder of all you see in one of the workshops, libraries or its park area.

If you're peckish, its IDAM restaurant by

chef Alain Ducasse (who has a restaurant at London's Dorchester hotel) offers the best of French Mediterranean cuisine.

Evening: Everywhere is safe in Doha so the evening options for wandering are endless. People watching in parks or souks is a favoured pastime.

The government says it's committed to be ever-greener and environmentally sensitive so more parks, trees and cycling tracks will soon be in place as well as a new tram system from November 2019, with four lines connecting the three stadiums built for the 2022 World Cup.

End with a meal in what is considered by many to be the best restaurant in the city – the chic Nozomi with its array of classic Japanese dishes with a modern twist. •