TOPONYMIC FACTFILE

Qatar

Country name	Qatar
State title	State of Qatar[1]
Name of citizen	Qatari
Official language	Arabic (*ara*)[2]
Country name in official language	قطر (Romanized: Qaṭar)
State title in official language	دولة قطر (Romanized: Dawlat Qaṭar)
Script	Arabic
Romanization System	[BGN/PCGN Romanization System for Arabic](#)[3]
ISO-3166 code (alpha-2/alpha-3)	QA/QAT
Capital (Conventional name)[4]	Doha
Capital in official language	الدوحة (Romanized: Ad Dawḥah)
Area / Population	11,586 sq km[2] / 2,552,088[5]

Introduction

Qatar gained independence from the United Kingdom in 1971. It is a country in south-west Asia, occupying a peninsula which juts into the Persian Gulf[6] from the north-east coast of the Arabian

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[1] Qatar is a monarchy ruled by an Emir (Arabic: *amīr*), so is an Emirate (*imārah*), but the official title uses the Arabic word *dawlah*, which means 'state'.

[2] ISO 639-2 codes are given for languages mentioned in this Factfile.

[3] https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/8580 00/ROMANIZATION_OF_ARABIC.pdf

[4] Only a limited number of features in Qatar have conventional spellings used in English. On cartographic products, PCGN recommends showing the local name (romanized if necessary) in primary position with the English conventional name in brackets. In English-language texts the conventional name alone can be used or the name can be shown the same way as on cartographic products, if desired. It is sometimes useful to reference both names at the first mention of a place.

[5] https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/qatar/ (2024 data). 88% of the population is non-Qatari (2015 estimate).

[6] Persian Gulf is the long-standing English conventional name for this body of water and is the name recommended for use on UK government products. The Gulf may be used *tout court* when it is clear from the context which feature is meant. The name Arabian Gulf may also be encountered, but this should not be used on UK government products.

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Peninsula. Qatari territory includes several islands[7] in the Gulf. It has a land boundary only with Saudi Arabia, which was demarcated in 1974.

With an area of 11,590km^2 Qatar is similar in size to The Gambia and slightly smaller than Montenegro. The country consists largely of low-lying arid desert. The majority of the population live in the capital, Doha, or its extensive suburbs. The economy is dependent on exports of oil and gas. As with some other small oil-rich Gulf states, a large proportion of the 2.5 million population[5] are non-citizen expatriates.

Geographical names policy

Geographical names in Qatar are found written in Arabic, which is the country's official language. Where possible, Arabic-script names should be taken from official Qatari sources and romanized according to the BGN/PCGN Romanization System for Arabic. It should be noted that Roman-script forms may be encountered which differ from those arising from the application of the BGN/PCGN Romanization System. Some features have conventional English-language names, which can be used in English-language text and should be shown in brackets after the romanized Arabic name on cartographic products.

The Qatar Centre for GIS (http://www.gisqatar.org.qa/ar/) produces mapping and has an online searchable map on its geoportal (https://geoportal.gisqatar.org.qa/qmap/index.html). The Arabic names from this map, romanized according to the BGN/PCGN Romanization System for Arabic are the names recommended by PCGN. The Roman-script version of the online map does not follow the BGN/PCGN Romanization System. The NGA Geographic Names Server (GNS) is also a good source of correctly romanized names, although to-date it does not incorporate the dialect features found on the Qatari mapping (see next paragraph).

It should be noted that there are a number of instances on recent Qatar GIS mapping where the initial *alif* of the definite article (Al) is dropped (in both Arabic and Roman script). This is a rare example of the Gulf Arabic dialect pronunciation being represented in the written language. Feghali describes the definite article in Gulf Arabic as follows: "The definite article takes the shape //l-// when used before nouns and adjectives that start with one consonant, e.g. //walad, lwalad// *the boy*…It takes the shape //li-, le-// before nouns and adjectives beginning with a cluster of two consonants or a consonant plus a semi-vowel., e.g. //likweet// *Kuwait*"[8].

PCGN has found evidence of this practice, not only in Qatar's GIS data, but also in other official and unofficial Qatari sources, and therefore recommends treating the Arabic script names as found on Qatar GIS as the primary names. In most cases, PCGN recommends that Arabic toponyms be treated according to the rules of Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), however Special Rule 8 of the BGN/PCGN Romanization System for Arabic makes provision for the recognition of colloquial elements when these occur in official Arabic script forms of toponyms. The MSA spellings of Qatari place names can usefully be included in brackets for reference.

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[7] The Hawar Islands (Arabic: *Juzur Ḥawār*) off the west coast of Qatar were disputed with Bahrain for some decades, but that dispute was resolved in 2001 in Bahrain's favour.

[8] Feghali, H. *Gulf Arabic: The Dialects of Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, UAE, and Oman*, Dunwoody Press 2008.

This phenomenon affects approximately 20% of Qatari toponyms. Some examples are listed in the table below. The PCGN recommended names are romanizations of the Qatari GIS names, spelt in accordance with the BGN/PCGN Romanization System for Arabic.

Examples of Qatari Toponyms

PCGN Recommended Name	Qatar GIS Arabic Script Name	Qatar GIS Roman Script Spelling	Former PCGN Recommended Spelling (MSA-style)
Likhwayr	لخوير	Lekhwair	Al Khuwayr
Liḥwaylah	لحويلة	Lehwaila	Al Ḥuwaylah
Libşayyir	لبصير	Lebsayyer	Al Buşayyir
Lijmilīyah	لجمليه	Lijmiliya	Al Jumaylīyah
Lūsayl	لوسيل	Lusail	Al Lusayl

Language

The official language of Qatar is Arabic, which is a Semitic language, written from right-to-left in Arabic script. Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) is used for most official written purposes (exception noted above under 'Geographical Names Policy'). The Qatari dialect of Arabic is a variety of Gulf Arabic (*afb*) (also spoken in eastern Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states such as Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates) but with pronunciation and/or vocabulary influences from Persian, English, some Indian languages and others. There are few specifically Qatari dialect features. English is widely used in both government and education and is commonly spoken as a second language.

In addition to the textual representation of the dialect pronunciation of the definite article described above, the following features of Gulf (and Qatari) Arabic may influence the Roman-script spellings of place names that might be encountered PCGN recommends that all names be transliterated according to the BGN/PCGN Romanization System for Arabic:

● The Arabic letter ق (*qāf*), which is romanized in the BGN/PCGN Romanization System for Arabic as 'q' (in MSA it is pronounced as a voiceless uvular plosive (IPA: /q/)) is pronounced in some contexts as the 'g' in 'get' or the 'j' as in 'jug' and may consequently sometimes be seen spelt with 'g' or 'j' rather than 'q' in Roman script. For example, while the MSA pronunciation of the country name is /qatˤɑr/, in the local dialect it is /gitˤɑr/[9].

● The Arabic letter ج (*jīm*), which is romanized in the BGN/PCGN Romanization System for Arabic as 'j', and pronounced in MSA as the 'j' in 'jug' (IPA: /d͡ʒ/) is sometimes pronounced as the 'y' in 'may'. For example, the male personal name Mājid might be pronounced 'Mayid'. This pronunciation trait is less often transferred to Roman-script spellings than is the abovementioned q-to-g or j change.

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[9] Johnstone, T.M., "Ḳaṭar", in: Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition, edited by: P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs. Consulted online on 09 November 2020 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_4018>

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Inventory of characters (and their Unicode encodings[10]):

The BGN/PCGN Romanization System for Arabic contains the following letter-diacritic combinations in addition to the unmodified letters of the basic Roman script[11]:

Romanization (upper case)	Unicode encoding	Romanization (lower case)	Unicode encoding
Á	00C1	á	00E1
Ā	0100	ā	0101
Ḍ	1E10	ḍ	1E11
Ḥ	1E28	ḥ	1E29
Ī	012A	ī	012B
Ş	015E	ş	015F
Ţ	0162	ţ	0163
Ū	016A	ū	016B
Ƶ	005A+0327*	ƶ	007A+0327*
'	2018 or 02BB	'	2019 or 02BC

*Note, the z + cedilla is not available as a single encoding.

Administrative structure

Since the 1960s, Qatar has been divided into municipalities (Arabic: *baladīyah*). A major reorganisation in 2004 resulted in the country being divided into seven municipalities at first-order administrative level (ADM1), with an eighth (*Ash Shīḥānīyah*) being created in 2014. The municipalities are further sub-divided into zones/districts (Arabic: *minţaqah,* plural: *manāţiq*) at second-order (ADM2) level.

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[10] See www.unicode.org

[11] Characters can be manually input into Microsoft Word documents by typing in these character codes and then holding down the ALT key and pressing /x/. The code will change to the required character. The letter can be copied and pasted into other programmes if required. Alternatively, the 'Insert – Symbol' command can be used; the code can be entered into the 'Character code' box which will show the corresponding letter. A GeoNames Soft-Copy Keyboard can be downloaded from the NGA website and used to enter the required letter-diacritic combinations for a particular region: https://geonames.nga.mil/geonames/GNSHome/services.html.

1. Ad Dawḥah (Doha) (25° 18' 00" N, 051° 30' 00" E)

Name in Arabic script	الدوحة
Long form name	Baladīyat ad Dawḥah
Long form name in Arabic script	بلدية الدوحة
ISO 3166-2 code	QA-DA
Centre	Ad Dawḥah (Doha) (25° 17' 12" N, 051° 32' 00" E)[12]
Centre in Arabic script	الدوحة
Variant names of centre and municipality	Ad Dawha; Ad Doha; Ad Dowhah

2. Al Khawr wa adh Dhakhīrah (25° 46' 00" N, 051° 19' 00" E)

Name in Arabic script	الخور والذخيرة
Long form name	Baladīyat al Khawr wa adh Dhakhīrah
Long form name in Arabic script	بلدية الخور والذخيرة
ISO 3166-2 code	QA-KH
Variant names	Al Khawr; Al Khor
Centre	Likhawr (Al Khawr) (25° 41' 02" N, 051° 30' 21" E)
Centre in Arabic script	لخور
Variant names of centre	Al Khor; Al-Khaur; Khor Shaqiq

3. Al Wakrah (24° 51' 00" N, 051° 20' 00" E)

Name in Arabic script	الوكرة
Long form name	Baladīyat al Wakrah
Long form name in Arabic script	بلدية الوكرة
ISO 3166-2 code	QA-WA
Centre	Al Wakrah (25° 10' 17" N, 051° 36' 12" E)
Centre in Arabic script	الوكرة
Variant names of municipality and centre	Al Wakra; Al Waqra; Al Waqrah; Wakra; Wakrah; Waqra

4. Ar Rayyān (24° 55' 00" N, 051° 00' 00" E)

Name in Arabic script	الريان
Long form name	Baladīyat ar Rayyān
Long form name in Arabic script	بلدية الريان
ISO 3166-2 code	QA-RA
Centre	Ar Rayyān (25° 17' 31" N, 051° 25' 28" E)
Centre in Arabic script	الريان
Variant names of municipality and centre	Al Rayyan; Al Raiyan; Raiyan

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[12] Ad Dawḥah (Doha) is the capital city of Qatar and also the administrative centre of Ad Dawḥah (Doha) Municipality.

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5. Ash Shīḥānīyah (25° 25' 00" N, 051° 02' 00" E)

Name in Arabic script	الشيحانية
Long form name	Baladīyat ash Shīḥānīyah
Long form name in Arabic script	بلدية الشيحانية
ISO 3166-2 code	QA-SH
Centre	Ash Shīḥānīyah (25° 22' 15" N, 051° 13' 21" E)
Centre in Arabic script	الشيحانية
Variant Names of municipality and centre	Al Sheehaniya; Ash Shaḥānīyah; Ash Shayhaniyah; al-Shihaniyya; Al Shahaniyah; الشحانية

6. Ash Shamāl (25° 59' 00" N, 051° 12' 00" E)

Name in Arabic script	الشمال
Long form name	Baladīyat ash Shamāl
Long form name in Arabic script	بلدية الشمال
ISO 3166-2 code	QA-MS
Variant names	Ash Shimāl; North; Northern Municipality; Al-Shamal; al-Shimal
Centre	Madīnat ash Shamāl (26° 07' 46" N, 051° 12' 03" E)
Centre in Arabic script	مدينة الشمال
Variant names of centre	Medina al Shimal

7. Aẕ Ẕa'āyin (25° 31' 00" N, 051° 27' 00" E)

Name in Arabic script	الظعاين
Long form name	Baladīyat aẕ Ẕa'āyin
Long form name in Arabic script	بلدية الظعاين
ISO 3166-2 code	QA-ZA
Centre	Aẕ Ẕa'āyin (25° 34' 39" N, 051° 28' 59" E)
Centre in Arabic script	الظعاين
Variant names of municipality and centre	Aḏ Ḏa'āyin; الضعاين; Al Da'ain; Dha'ain; Edh Dha'ain; Aẕ Ẕa'ā'in, Al Daayen

8. Umm Şalāl (25° 28' 00" N, 051° 20' 00" E)

Name in Arabic script	أم صلال
Long form name	Baladīyat Umm Şalāl
Long form name in Arabic script	بلدية أم صلال
ISO 3166-2 code	QA-US
Variant names	Umm Slal; Um Salal
Centre	Umm Şalāl 'Alī (25° 28' 11" N, 051° 23' 51" E)
Centre in Arabic script	أم صلال على
Variant names of centre	Umm Şilāl 'Alī; Umm-al-Salal; Umm Slal Ali, Um Salal Ali

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Other Significant Locations

PCGN Approved Name	Name in Arabic Script	Conventional Name	Variant Names/Spellings	Location	Feature Type
Abū Samrah	أبو سمرة		Bū Samrah; بو سمرة	24° 44' 37" N 50° 49' 54" E	Populated place
Adh Dhakhīrah	الذخيرة		Ad Dhakhīrah; Adh Dhakhīra; Al Dakhirah; Dakhira; Dhakhīrah; Al Dhekra	25° 43' 55" N 51° 32' 38" E	Populated place
Al Wukayr	الوكير		Al-Wukair	25° 09' 04" N 51° 32' 14" E	Populated place
Ar Ruways	الرويس		Ar Ruʻays; Ar Ruwais; Ruwais; الروئس	26° 08' 23" N 51° 12' 54" E	Populated place
Dawḥat Salwá	دوحة سلوى		Dawḥat as Salwá; Khalīj Salwá; Dohat as Salwa; Dawḥat Salwah; خليج سلوى	25° 20' 48" N 50° 38' 40" E	Bay
Ḥālūl	حالول		Jazīrat Ḥālūl	25° 40' 29" N 52° 24' 39" E	Island
Jazīrat Jinān[13]	جزيرة جنان	Janan Island	Al Janān; Al Jinān; Janān	25° 33' 31" N 50° 44' 06" E	Island
Jazīrat Rakan	جزيرة ركن		Jazīrat Raʼs Rakan; Jazīrat Rukn; جزيرة رأس ركن	26° 10' 38" N 51° 13' 14" E	Island
Juzur Ḥawār[14]	جزر حوار	Hawar Islands	Howar; Djezira Hawar	25° 39' 18" N 50° 45' 17" E	Island group
Khawr Liʻadayd (Khawr Al ʻUdayd)	لعديد (خور العديد)		Khor Leadaid; Khor al Odaid	24° 36' 35" N 51° 23' 17" E	Inlet
Musayʻīd (Mesaieed)	مسيعيد		Mesaieed; Umm Said; Umm Saʻīd;	24° 59' 32" N 51° 33' 02" E	Populated place

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[13] In the 2001 ICJ judgement that awarded the Hawar Islands to Bahrain, Janan Island, a small island south of Hawar Island, was also considered. Based on a previous agreement when both Qatar and Bahrain were under British protection, it was judged to be separate from the Hawar Islands and so considered by the court separately. It was awarded to Qatar.

[14] These islands were disputed between Qatar and Bahrain. In 2001 the dispute was resolved in favour of Bahrain.

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PCGN Approved Name	Name in Arabic Script	Conventional Name	Variant Names/Spellings	Location	Feature Type
			Umm Saʻad; أم سعيد		
Ra's Laffān	رأس لفان		Ras Lafan; Ras Laffan Industrial City	25° 54' 15" N 51° 35' 34" E	Industrial hub and point
Umm Bāb	أم باب		Um Bab; Um Baab	25° 12' 35" N 50° 48' 04" E	Populated place

Useful references

- BBC Country Profile: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-14702226
- BGN Geographic Names Standardization Policy for Qatar: https://geonames.nga.mil/geonames/GNSSearch/GNSDocs/policies/Qatar_Country_Policy_webversion_Jun_2018.pdf
- BGN/PCGN Romanization System for Arabic: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/858000/ROMANIZATION_OF_ARABIC.pdf
- CIA World Factbook: https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/qatar/
- International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA): https://www.internationalphoneticassociation.org/content/full-ipa-chart
- International Organization for Standardization (ISO): www.iso.org
- ISO Online Browsing Platform (OBP): https://www.iso.org/obp/ui#home
- Languages: www.ethnologue.com, www.omniglot.com
- Qatar Centre for GIS: http://www.gisqatar.org.qa/ar/
- Qatar Geoportal: https://geoportal.gisqatar.org.qa/qmap/index.html
- Qatar Ministry of Municipality and Environment: http://www.mme.gov.qa/cui/index.dox
- Unicode: www.unicode.org
- US Board on Geographic Names GEOnet Names Server: https://geonames.nga.mil/gns/html/
- US Library of Congress *Persian Gulf states: country studies*: https://www.loc.gov/item/93046476/

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