

Country: Qatar
Title: Consular Information Sheet
Issued: July 15, 2005
Source: U.S. Department of State

Qatar
July 15, 2005

COUNTRY DESCRIPTION: Qatar is a monarchy governed by the Al-Thani family in consultation with a council of ministers, an appointed advisory council and an elected municipal council. In April 2003, approximately 96 percent of voters approved a new constitution, which came into force in June 2005. Islamic ideals and beliefs provide the foundation of the country's customs, laws and practices. Located in the heart of the Arabian (Persian) Gulf, Qatar is a dynamic, modern, developed country that is among the wealthiest per capita in the world. The capital is Doha. Tourist facilities are available. Read the Department of State Background Notes on Qatar at <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5437.htm> for additional information.

CRIMINAL PENALTIES: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Qatari laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Incidents involving insults or obscene language/gestures often result in arrest and/or fines, whether the incident occurs between private parties or involves officers of the law. Penalties for drunk driving and other alcohol-related offenses are treated with severity and may result in heavy fines, imprisonment, or expulsion from the country. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Qatar are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. **Homosexual** activity is considered a criminal offense, and those convicted may be sentenced to lashing and/or a prison sentence, and/or deportation. Engaging in illicit sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States. For more information visit http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_criminal.html.

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