Number of nationalities eligible to enter visa-free highest in region

Qatar considering further enhancements to visa policy, including waiver for holders of visa/resident permit for GCC and Schengen countries, as well as UK, USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand

DOHA, Qatar - Qatar's Ministry of Interior (MoI), Qatar Tourism Authority (QTA) and Qatar Airways today announced that Qatar will allow visa-free entry for citizens of 80 countries, effective immediately.

Citizens of those countries* wishing to visit Qatar will no longer need to apply or pay for a visa; instead, a multi-entry waiver will be issued free-of-charge at the port of entry, upon presentation of a valid passport with a minimum validity of six months and a confirmed onward or return ticket.

Depending on the nationality of the visitor, the waiver will either be valid for 180 days, from the date of issue, and allow the visitor to spend a total of 90 days in Qatar (multiple-entry waiver); or it will be valid for 30 days from the date of issue and entitle the visitor to spend up to 30 days in Qatar with the possibility of applying for an extension of the waiver for an additional 30 days (multiple-entry waiver).

These developments come as part of a series of measures that Qatar has taken to facilitate visitor access to the country. Last month, Qatar launched an e-visa platform, www.qatarvisaservice.com, through which travellers of all nationalities can apply for tourist and visitor visas with more efficiency and ease. The country is also considering further enhancements to its visa policy, such as waiving visa requirements for holders of a residence permit or a valid visa from the nations of the Gulf Cooperation Council (Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates), United Kingdom, United States of America, Canada, Australia, New Zealand or the Schengen countries. This waiver would allow eligible visitors to obtain an *Electronic Travel Authorisation* by completing a simple online application at least 48 hours prior to travel.

Qatar Airways Group Chief Executive, His Excellency Mr. Akbar Al Baker, said: “Today’s announcement places the State of Qatar as the most open country in the region. This is a momentous occasion for Qatar, making the number of nationalities eligible to enter our country without a visa the highest in region, which is something that we are very proud of.

“Qatar Airways is the patriotic flag carrier for the State of Qatar and as such we are extremely honoured to bring millions of people each year to our beautiful, welcoming and historic country. This important initiative from the Ministry of Interior and Qatar Tourism Authority will provide an opportunity to welcome even more visitors, from even more countries, to experience the many exciting attractions that await them.”

According to Hassan Al Ibrahim, Chief Tourism Development officer at QTA, visa facilitation is a critical component of the national tourism sector strategy, which QTA is currently reviewing in partnership with stakeholders from the public and private sectors. With renewed focus by the country’s leadership on diversifying the national economy, a revised strategy which empowers various players to boost the growth of tourism is set to be launched on 27 September 2017, when Qatar hosts the official celebrations of World Tourism Day.

“Easing entry to Qatar is a key enabler for the growth of Qatar’s tourism industry. With this

announcement we are already turning the pages of the Next Chapter of Qatar's journey towards 2030," commented Al Ibrahim. "Together with our partners in the public and private sectors, we have examined all of the elements needed to create a smooth and enticing experience that can attract visitors from around the world. There is no doubt that facilitating and streamlining access at all ports of entry are key factors in creating a positive first and lasting impression of Qatar."

Al Ibrahim added, "With 80 countries eligible for a visa waiver, Qatar is now the most open country in the region and we are delighted to invite visitors to discover our renowned hospitality, cultural heritage and natural treasures."

Brigadier Mohammed Al Ateeq, Director General of the Department of Passport and Expatriates Affairs at MoI, commented, "We are very pleased to announce that nationals of 80 countries are now eligible for a visa waiver and can enter Qatar without requiring any prior visa arrangements. Together with our partners at QTA and Qatar Airways, we have been working to enhance our country's visa policies and implement solutions to better facilitate travel to Qatar. Further enhancements are being studied and we look forward to announcing them in due course."

In November 2016, Qatar introduced a free transit visa, which allows passengers of all nationalities transiting in Qatar for a minimum of five hours to stay in Qatar for up to 96 hours (four days). In May 2017, QTA launched +Qatar, an initiative to promote the country as a stopover destination, with the national carrier, Qatar Airways. These measures, along with intensified international marketing, have resulted in a 39 per cent increase in the number of stopover visitors during the first six months of 2017, compared with the same period last year.

As part of Qatar Airways' and QTA's combined efforts to boost tourism in the country, the award-winning airline has accelerated its global expansion plans, and recently announced the launch of a number of new destinations that it is adding to its network by the end of August including Kiev, Ukraine and Prague, Czech Republic. Yesterday, the airline launched Sohar, in the Sultanate of Oman. Qatar Airways also recently launched a direct service to Dublin, Republic of Ireland; Nice, France and Skopje, connecting even more people to more places, and making it easier than ever for passengers to visit Qatar as part of their journey.

The below section details the new visa waiver eligibility for citizens of the 80 countries.

Entry to Qatar is approved at the sole discretion of Qatar's Ministry of Interior.

A) Nationals of the following 33 countries will not require prior visa arrangements and can obtain a visa waiver upon arrival in Qatar. The waiver will be valid for 180 days from the date of issuance and entitle its holder to spend up to 90 days in Qatar, during either a single trip or on multiple trips.

1. Austria

2. Bahamas

3. Belgium

4. Bulgaria

5. Croatia

6. Cyprus

7. Czech Republic

8. Denmark

9. Estonia

10. Finland

11. France

12. Germany

13. Greece

14. Hungary

15. Iceland

16. Italy

17. Latvia

18. Liechtenstein

19. Lithuania

20. Luxembourg

21. Malta

22. Netherlands

23. Norway

24. Poland

25. Portugal

26. Romania

27. Seychelles

28. Slovakia

29. Slovenia

30. Spain

31. Sweden

32. Switzerland

33. Turkey

B) Nationals of the following 47 countries will not require prior visa arrangements and can obtain a visa waiver upon arrival in Qatar. The waiver will be valid for 30 days from the date of issuance and entitle its holder to spend up to 30 days in Qatar, during either a single trip or on multiple trips. This waiver may be extended for a further 30 days.

1. Andorra

2. Argentina

3. Australia

4. Belarus

5. Bolivia

6. Brazil

7. Brunei

8. Canada

9. Chile

10. China

11. Colombia

12. Ecuador

13. Panama

14. Costa Rica

15. Georgia

16. Guyana

17. Hong Kong

18. India

19. Indonesia

20. Ireland

21. Japan

22. Kazakhstan

23. Lebanon

24. Azerbaijan

25. Macedonia

26. Malaysia

27. Maldives

28. Mexico

29. Moldova

30. Monaco

31. New Zealand

32. Paraguay

33. Peru

34. Russia

35. San Marino

36. Singapore

37. South Africa

38. South Korea

39. Suriname

40. Cuba

41. Thailand

42. Ukraine

43. United Kingdom

44. United States

45. Uruguay

46. Vatican City

47. *Venezuela*

About Qatar Tourism Authority (QTA)

Long-recognised 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%.

For further information please contact:

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For images, please visit: https://www.flickr.com/photos/qatarairways/albums/72157687386333545

Notes to Editors:

About Qatar Airways

Qatar Airways, the national carrier of the State of Qatar, is celebrating 20 years of Going Places Together with travellers across its more than 150 business and leisure destinations. The world's fast growing airline will add a number of exciting new destinations to its growing network in 2017/18, including Dublin, Nice, Skopje, Sarajevo and many more, flying passengers on board its modern fleet of 200 aircraft.

A multiple award-winning airline, Qatar Airways was recently named Airline of the Year by the 2017 World Airline Awards, managed by international air transport rating organisation Skytrax. It was also named World's Best Business Class, Best Airline in the Middle East, and World's Best First Class Airline Lounge.

Qatar Airways is a member of the **one**world 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,
one
world, 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' in-flight 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 and 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 proudly supports a range of exciting international and local initiatives dedicated to enriching the global community that it serves. Qatar Airways, the official FIFA partner, is the official sponsor of many top-level sporting events, including the FIFA 2018 and 2022 World Cups, reflecting 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 international cargo carrier, serves 60 exclusive freighter destinations worldwide via its world-class Doha hub and also delivers freight to more than 150 key business and leisure destinations globally with 200 aircraft. The Qatar Airways Cargo fleet includes eight Airbus A330 freighters, 12 Boeing 777 freighters and one Boeing 747 freighter.

For further information, please contact:

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