



## DESTINATION DOHA DAZZLES

### Tuesday 16 March 2010

“World Winning City”. “Cultural Destination of the Year”. “One of This Year’s Must-Visit”. “The 12th Place to Change Your World.”

Doha has been reaping coveted “titles” from New York Times and other leading travel publications of late, outranking the likes of Chicago, Rome or Copenhagen.

Suddenly it seems, Qatar’s capital city is a global hotspot and “must-go” destination.

How did this happen? What’s Doha doing?

### Niche strategy

Behind Doha’s seeming “out-of-the-blue” recognition is a long-term and well-crafted tourism strategy focused on the niche segments of business, sports and culture.

As the world’s fastest growing economy, Qatar provides an upscale world of facilities and attractions within a traditional Arab culture. In addition, a US\$17billion allocation for tourism development through 2014 is directed towards building the infrastructure to support the targeted sectors.

Qatar Tourism Authority (QTA) is targeting 20% growth during the next five years.

### Thriving hotel scene

The QTA reported recently that a total of 6,743 hotel rooms and units would be added to the Qatari hospitality market this year, with 41 facilities scheduled to be operational by the end of 2010.

Doha will have a further 23 new facilities in 2010 adding 4,689 rooms—a 55% increase on last year’s figures. A high 90 of the increase is expected to come from four and five-star hotels including luxury brands Kempinski, Hilton and Shangri-La.

QTA expects the number of hotel rooms to nearly triple by 2012, rising to a total of 26,000.



### **2010 Arab Capital of Culture**

When Doha unveiled the stunning Museum of Islamic Art last year, not to mention a raft of ambitious and high-profile cultural projects underway, the city was singled out as the Cultural Destination of the Year.

It's no surprise that Doha was chosen to be the 2010 Arab Capital of Culture, as designated by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO). More than 50 cultural events are expected to take place the entire year including theatre, music and dance festivals.

### **Education capital of the Middle East to boot**

Another pride of Doha is an exciting education vision come true called Education City. A buzzing enclave of knowledge and education at its best, Education City is home to the satellite campuses of six top ranking American universities.

During a recent visit to the Carnegie Mellon University-Qatar, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said she was impressed by Qatar's commitment to education.

"Education City is so important for Qatar and beyond... It sends a strong message, not just here in the region, but around the world," she said.

A signature endeavour of the Qatar Foundation, Education City was built on a "nurture brains before oil wells" philosophy– the belief in the power of education to guide Qatar into a post hydrocarbon economy.

### **Wait there's more**

Doha's new US\$5billion international airport, said to be the benchmark for all future airports, will handle 50 million passengers when completed in 2015.

A new seaport is underway and a US\$25billion metro and light rail is on the planning board.

The Qatar-Bahrain Friendship Bridge–stretching 40 kilometres (25 miles) and said to be the longest bridge in the world when completed, beating the 35 kilometre (22 mile) Ningbo-Shanghai bridge in China–is scheduled to begin construction in 2010. It is estimated it will take over four years to complete the causeway.