

# Qatar Duty Free unveils Souq Al Matar: a mix of heritage and hospitality



QDF's leadership, VIPs, international and local media, and KOLs attended the grand opening event [L-R]: Qatar Duty Free Senior Vice President, Mr. Thabet Musleh, Chairman of Qatar Tourism, His Excellency Mr. Saad bin Ali bin Saad Al Kharji, Qatar Airways Group Chief Executive Officer, Engr. Badr Mohammed Al-Meer, Arab Engineering Bureau and IJAE Group CEO & Chief Architect, Mr. Ibrahim M. Jaidah

Qatar Duty Free (QDF), owner and operator of all retail and catering outlets at Hamad International Airport (HIA) in Doha, today unveiled Souq Al Matar - an experiential mixed retail and dining concept - at a grand opening event attended by QDF's leadership, VIPs, international and local media, and KOLs.

Souq Al Matar - *matar* being the Arabic word for airport - is a traditional Qatari Souq located in the North Node terminal of HIA, featuring seven shops and two restaurants. The concept was developed in collaboration with award-winning architect Ibrahim M. Jaidah, who is renowned for delivering world-class architectural projects in Qatar such as the Al Thumama Stadium.

## Bringing Qatar to travelers

Delivering a "sense of place" experience, Souq Al Matar recreates the bustling energy and aesthetics of Qatar's iconic traditional markets. Wicker woven ceilings, arched doorways, wooden-framed windows, and numerous other decorative details deliver an immersive and culturally resonant Souq experience. Strengthening the space's celebration of Qatari heritage, a dhow boat is displayed center stage, paying homage to the maritime trade which thrived in the country and had a strong association with the markets.

Throughout the first week of the Souq's opening, customers can explore a range of captivating cultural experiences showcasing traditional craftsmanship, including live basket-weaving demonstration and Sadu weaving - a traditional practice that combines geometric patterns with vibrant colors which hold cultural motifs. In addition, greeters will welcome guests in traditional Qatari attire, serving Arabic coffee *gahwa* and dates, as serving *gahwa* and dates signifies hospitality and generosity in the Qatari culture. Visitors can also see skilled artisans tailoring the Bishit - a traditional men's robe - and Henna artists creating stunning designs on women's hands.

At the opening event, a Naham group performed "sea music," a tradition that pearl divers practiced for encouragement and entertainment during their trips. In addition, an orchestral performance combining melodies from the past and the present composed by renowned Qatar composer and songwriter Dana Al Fardan was performed.

Qatar Airways Group Chief Executive Officer, Engr. Badr Mohammed Al-Meer said, "Our goal has always been to ensure that the travel experience at Hamad International Airport remains one of the best in the world. Souq Al Matar brings a whole new dimension to passengers, where they can shop, dine, and experience a taste of Qatar without having to leave the airport. We have once again raised the bar of what the airport experience can aspire to be, making it a part of the cultural experience itself, not just a transit hub."

Qatar Duty Free Senior Vice President, Thabet Musleh said, "Souq Al Matar underlines that, at Qatar Duty Free, we not only have something for everyone, we have something truly unique. This a first-of-its-kind experience in an airport - a truly original concept that goes beyond 'sense of place' to deliver 'transit tourism', bringing Qatar directly to travelers. The execution emphasizes our exceptional attention to detail and service, further cementing Qatar Duty Free as a true leader in airport retail and catering."

Arab Engineering Bureau and IJAE Group CEO & Chief Architect, Ibrahim M. Jaidah added, "With the conceptualization of Souq Al Matar, my goal was to take guests on a journey through a vibrant and enchanting Souq, much like they would experience when visiting Qatar. Designed with traditional Qatari architecture to evoke a warm and hospitable atmosphere, Souq Al Matar truly immerses passengers in a rich cultural experience. We invite all passengers to visit the souq to engage in an authentic Qatari encounter while they travel."

## **Where F&B meets retail**

The line-up of the shops and dining options at Souq Al Matar truly reflects the goods and refreshments traditionally found in the alleyways of Qatar's old markets. With two restaurants and seven stores, there are options for all shoppers, ensuring the space is appealing and inclusive to HIA's customers.

**Khaneen:** *beautiful smell* in Khaleeji dialect - takes customers on a captivating olfactory journey, revealing Qatar's unique aromas and exquisite blends. The shop features a stunning collection of high-quality fragrances with premium packaging and traditional yet modern scents by home-based designers. The collection at the Souq includes exclusively curated perfume oils crafted with the finest ingredients and traditional elements.

**Al Attar:** offers a unique apothecary store experience, where customers can explore an assortment of premium honey, dates, coffees, teas, herbs and spices, perfect for those looking to take a piece of Qatari culture back home.

**Sogha:** a Khaleeji word for travel gifts, it is a souvenir shop at the souq, showcasing a variety of keepsakes perfect for gifting or as a personal memento.

**Fwala:** a Khaleeji word used for dessert assortment served to house guests - offers a tantalising assortment of traditional Qatari sweets, including packaged desserts traditionally enjoyed during special occasions and festive seasons such as Eid. All the brands featured at Fwala are based in Qatar, and the products locally made.

**Al Darzi:** from the Khaleeji term for tailor or embroiderer - is a women's fashion shop displaying a stunning array of traditional garments including a fabulous collection of Jalabeyas, abayas and shilas. The traditional Qatari dress is not only a cultural practice but also an iconic fashion trend for the women of Qatar today.

**Al Beshit:** a men's robe worn in the Khaleej during special occasions and celebratory events- is the name of the men's wear shop at Souq Al Matar. It features a collection of traditional Qatar clothing including the thobe, gutra, and egal and other garments that cultural heritage with modern fashion trends.

**Dukkan:** offers a selection of affordable confectionery and snacks, including the renowned Pafki chips and other local delicacies that will stir nostalgia in older generations of Qatari shoppers. Dukkan also features a selection of sweets, toys and drinks regularly found in the local supermarkets of Qatar's residential areas.

**Basta:** a modern Qatari concept, serves traditional food with a modern twist. The menu offers a rich variety of famous dishes from the Khaleeji cuisine, such as Balalit - sweetened thin noodles with saffron and plain omelets - and the iconic Shakshuka. The menu also includes, Majboos and Biryani, well-known main dishes in the Qatari and Khaleeji cuisine.

**Chapati and Karak:** Qatar's acclaimed café restaurant concept - was inspired by traditional Indian cuisine and has been a staple of Qatar's dining scene for more than 50 years.

**See more photos of the event below:**









