

# Capturing the souvenir moments through photography

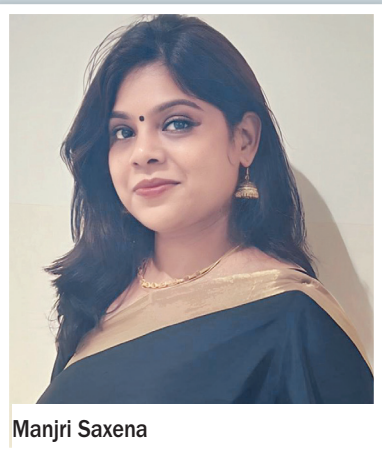
FOR Manjri Saxena, very much like every other expatriate, the National Day of Qatar holds immense significance. “It’s a day of pride, celebration, and unity, which commemorates Qatar’s rich history, culture, and achievements,” says the freelance photographer based in Qatar.

The National Day, she notes, serves as a momentous occasion to reflect on Qatar’s journey, from its past to the present accomplishments. “It’s a time when people come together to honour their heritage, traditions, and the visionary leadership that has propelled the nation towards progress and prosperity,” says the expat woman who has participated in several national and international exhibitions and won many awards from Qatar Museums and Qatar’s ministries.

“The festivities during the National Day this time, like always, were vibrant and colourful, showcasing the country’s cultural heritage through parades, traditional performances, exhibitions, fireworks, and a slew of events across the country. It was a time when Qatari citizens and residents alike joined in the jubilation, fostering a sense of community and patriotism,” she notes.

“Moreover, the National Day provides a platform to educate the younger generations about Qatar’s rich history and values, instilling a sense of pride and belonging in the hearts of the youth.

“Overall, the National Day in Qatar is a momentous celebration that unites people from diverse backgrounds, fostering a strong sense of national identity and pride among the residents while



Manjri Saxena



Photos by Manjri Saxena

honouring the country’s past as we all look forward to a promising future.

“This was an extraordinary day for me as I immersed myself in cultural displays, attended parades, enjoyed traditional performances, tasted au-

thentic cuisine, and captured moments through photography while respecting the local customs,” says the certified photojournalist from NYIP.

Expatriates, she points out, have always viewed Qatar as a second home underscoring the nation’s success



in fostering inclusiveness and a welcoming environment. The country’s high-quality living standards, career opportunities, and commitment to cultural exchange contribute to a sense of belonging among expatriates. Qatar’s supportive infrastructure, diverse ex-

patriate communities, and emphasis on safety further enhance the experience, making it a desirable and comfortable place for people from different backgrounds to call their second home.

“I have been living in Qatar for the last seven years. From my experience, I can say that Qatar is a fascinating place that combines tradition with modernity seamlessly. Its rapid development, vibrant cultural scene, and a strong sense of community make it an appealing destination for all. The country’s commitment to preserving its heritage while embracing innovation and diversity creates a unique environment fostering growth and inclusion. The blend of traditional Qatari values with a global outlook contributes to making Qatar a warm and welcoming place to live in,” she avers. “The things that attract me most about Qatar are the country’s commitment to innovation and inclusiveness,” she sums up.

# Indian expats laud Qatar’s blend of traditional values and global outlook

QATAR National Day, which is celebrated annually on December 18 (as the national commemoration of Qatar’s unification in 1878), holds a special place in the hearts of expatriates, who view Qatar as their cherished second home that comes entwined with its inclusive environment, diverse community, and vast pool of opportunities. The welcoming atmosphere, safety, and strong bonding among residents create a strong attachment, making Qatar an ideal destination for those living away from their home countries. A diverse section of Indian expatriates narrated to Qatar Tribune what Qatar National Day means to them. Excerpts:

### Qatar has always been a second home for us

**Manikantan A.P**

Qatar National Day is always a very special occasion for the residents of Qatar. Throughout the year we keep awaiting this day to get together with friends and family to take part in the events during the day and night. As residents, we all celebrate this day together.

As multiple events are slated in different locations, we try to reach the Corniche to be a part of the grand celebrations together with other residents. At night, watching the beautiful fireworks is quite a majestic experience.

Qatar has always been a second home for us all these years. We have been a part of Qatar’s culture and have seen the amazing growth of this country. We are proud of Qatar and its accomplishments.

I have been living in Qatar for almost 19 years now and this country and its people have helped me become the person I am today.

Living here in our “second home”, we have experienced the tremendous care this country provides us in any difficult situation, like, for example, during the COVID-19 pandemic.

(Manikantan A.P is a member of the Board of Governors, Indian Business & Professionals Council, IBPC, which works under the aegis of the Indian Embassy in Qatar)



### A cherished occasion for residents

**Arun Lakshaman**

Qatar National Day stands as a cherished day of celebration for Qatar’s citizens and residents, embodying pride, unity, and heritage. It’s a time to honour the country’s rich history and the visionary leadership of its rulers. The day fosters a profound sense of belonging and patriotism. As festivities dot the nation with vibrant parades, traditional performances,



cultural exhibitions, and dazzling fireworks, echoing the spirit of solidarity, the day commemorates Qatar’s progress, values, and accomplishments, reinforcing the deep-rooted love for the nation. Qatar National Day serves as a poignant reminder of the country’s past and its promising future.

There is so much to explore in Qatar during the winter season and this time a host of exciting and entertaining events were lined up during the National Day holidays.

Expatriates in Qatar view the country as their second home, entwined with a sense of belonging fostered by its inclusive environment, diverse community, and opportunities. The welcoming atmosphere, safety, and shared experiences create a strong attachment, making Qatar a cherished and welcoming haven for those living away from their countries.

I will be completing three years in Qatar in February this year. It has been a fantastic journey for me in Qatar and I have never felt away from home right from the time I arrived here. Whether it’s the people, food or culture, Qatar has truly been an amazing place to live in. I am looking forward to spending many more exciting years filled with happiness, peace and prosperity in this beautiful country.

Qatar has everything one needs to lead a happy, peaceful and safe life. It’s also the hub of sports and culture in the region. Some of the best attractions I have found here are the large clean parks in the middle of the city that add to its beauty and bestow upon families quality time to spend with their loved ones.

Qatar has one of the best public transportation systems and healthcare

facilities. It has beautifully managed to offer everything to every section of society. This is something countries across the world should learn from Qatar.

(Arun Lakshaman is the Business Director of MirchiOne 89.6 FM Qatar. Hailing from the southern Indian state of Kerala, he has been living in Qatar for three years.)

### A sense of pride and unity

**Sophia Bukhari**

I came to Qatar in 1990 and my daughter was born here. Qatar is a country that I adopted first and then it adopted me so I call it my home.

Living in Qatar is like sitting at an intersection between tradition and modernity. The country caters to locals and expatriates equally and makes their stay enjoyable and memorable. The country has a warm climate and a modern infrastructure, and offers a high standard of living, with a good health care and education system and a range of recreational activities.

People are attracted to Qatar for its economic prosperity, cultural richness, and safe lifestyle. Qatar is one of the few countries with a low crime rate. The country’s commitment to development and hosting major events like the FIFA World Cup also contributes to its global appeal.

Qatar National Day is a very special occasion for everyone living in this wonderful country. The whole country is in a festive mood during this time. Celebrating Qatar National Day evokes a sense of pride, unity and patriotism among Qataris and residents equally. The day is marked by joyous festivities, traditional performances, and a strong sense of national identity.

I saw expatriates taking part in activities at Aspire, Corniche and the Industrial Area. On 18 December, walking to the Corniche is quite an experience. You get to see your friends and acquaintances, and children running around or riding their tricycles.

Hospitality is synonymous with Arab culture and one can see people offering karak and popcorn as you walk along the Corniche. On this day,



the Corniche is full of people eagerly awaiting the fireworks. At the community level too, we plan community dinners either on Corniche or in community halls.

(Sophia Bukhari has been a resident of Qatar for the past 34 years. She is currently working at Qatar University as a lecturer in the Foundation Program)

### We consider Qatar as our vibrant second home

**Pankaj Prasun**

Qatar National Day holds great significance for us as the day reminds us about the rich history, heritage, culture, sacrifices of its founders, and the progress made by the country. The day fosters a sense of national pride and unity among the people of Qatar.

Qatar has witnessed rapid economic growth and global influence, attracting people from all around the world. Approximately, 700,000 Indians live in Qatar, contributing to the national development.



The National Day is marked by a grand parade, air show, water show, fireworks, traditional performances, cultural displays, camel and horse racing, falconry, traditional dhow sailing, and decorating of homes and cars etc. Residents relish the traditional Qatari/Arabic food such as Machboos, Madrouba, Kousa Mahshi, Warak Enab, Balaleet, Umm Ali, Kunafa, Luqaimat, Mehalabiya, Gahwa, Qimam, Jallab, Laban etc.

Along with my children and wife, we enjoyed outdoor facilities during the National Day holidays such as Darb Al Saai, Expo 2023, Torba Market, B12 beach and Sikkat Wadi Msheireb, taking advantage of the pleasant weather.

Qatar has always been welcoming and inclusive for expatriates and promoted a multicultural environment. Successful hosting of the FIFA Football World Cup was a major milestone.

I have been living in Qatar with my family for the past nine years, and we have had truly exceptional experiences. The welcoming nature of the country makes it easy to make friends and find activities to enjoy.

Qatar offers a great environment for both work and leisure and we consider it as our vibrant second home.

The things that attract me most about Qatar are: that it is the safest country in the world for families, offers a unique blend of tradition and modernity, attracts best professionals, provides excellent education and healthcare systems, unique parks, recreational facilities, variety of cuisines, well-developed transportation system, and a centralized geographical location from both west and east.

(Pankaj Prasun is a senior finance professional with more than 18 years of international experience in corporate finance, investment banking, hospitality and manufacturing. Currently, Pankaj is the Director of Finance at Katara Hospitality, Murwab Hotel Group.)

### An example of women’s empowerment

**Minha Manaf**

Qatar National Day brings all the residents together and its real highlight is the spirit of unity that people carry around. This is also a time when we travel to every nook of the country, enjoying its beauty while being grateful to the country for its plethora of great memories.

With all the facilities and happiness that we derive here, the residents cultivate a special bond with the country. Qatar treats both residents and citizens equally, providing a harmonious social life.

Qatar shares a friendly bond with all the countries around the world, attracts the best of talents, and treats residents fairly and with open arms.

My journey with Qatar began 10 years back. My cherished childhood memories are linked to this country. When it comes to safety and women’s empowerment, Qatar is an ideal place. I have always been given equal chances to showcase my talent and capabilities including this very opportunity to write for this column.

(A student of grade X in M.E.S Indian School, Minha Manaf has been a resident of Qatar for almost 10 years. She is an aspiring artist.)

