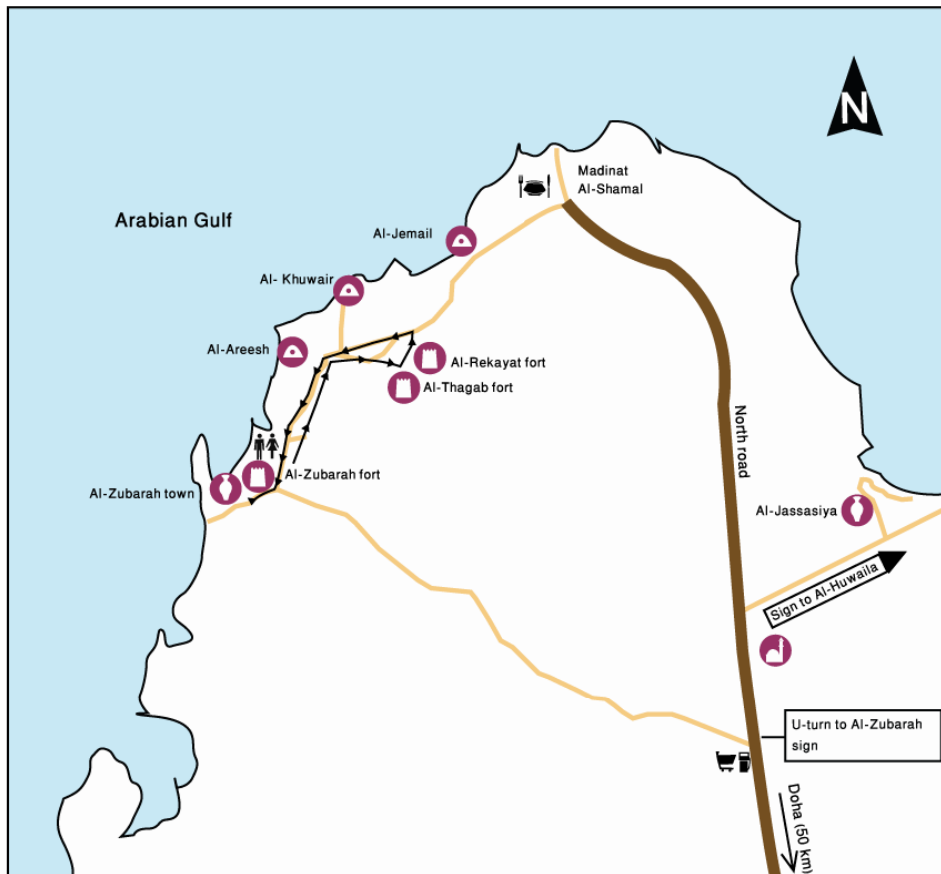


NORTH OF QATAR FOR ADVENTUROUS SPIRITS

Spend an entire day enjoying sites with your four-wheel car

Travel 400 year back in the history of Qatar in one day. Drive a four-wheel-drive vehicle to the northwest and navigate through the desert with a GPS or compass. Visit the North forts (Al-Thagab and Al-Rekayat), the regional museum housed at Al-Zubarah fort and the large archaeological area of Al-Zubarah town. Then, enjoy swimming in the sea near the old ruins.



To get there, take the North Road to Al-Khor for approximately 50 km and make a U-turn at the Al-Zubarah sign. Just before Al-Zubarah fort, turn right and follow the map.

If you have a GPS device, you can set the coordinates mentioned in the following table. If not, make sure you have a compass.

Name of the site	UTM coordinates
Al-Rekayat	N 26° 03' 05.32" E 51° 07' 50"
Al-Thagab	N 26° 01' 59" E 51° 07' 02.02"
Al-Zubarah fort	N 25° 58' 34" E 51° 02' 43"
Al-Zubarah town	N 25° 58' 27.4" E 51° 01' 39"

The itinerary starts at the North forts (Al-Thagab and Al-Rekayat). Once you get to the Al-Khuwair radio station, drive inland off-road for two km, heading in the direction of a group of houses and trees. These sites are always open and there is no admission fee.

You should consider that rain is a priceless commodity in the desert, and although much of the surrounding areas have been desolate for hundreds of years, these two forts were constructed in the 17th century to help the inhabitants protect nearby “raudah”, a small depression, where rainwater would collect in the spring months. Today, water is still collected in wells nearby the fort, enabling local farmers to grow vegetables.

Al-Thagab is a traditional rectangular fort. Similar to the Al-Zubarah, Al-Thagab has three round corner defensive towers and one rectangular one. Its central courtyard is a wide-open space, and all of the interior rooms are on the west side.

Just two km away towards the north, you will find Al-Rekayat fort, another traditional four-sided fort, with three rectangular towers and one circular one. The most remarkable feature of this fort is its walls. The bottom portions are made with irregular coral rock and limestone blocks joined together with mud mortar, but the tops are made of mud bricks. This technique is known locally as “liban”, though most of the world calls it “adobe”. Moreover, a small mosque for the farmers can still be found outside the Al-Rekayat fort. Instead of using a “minaret” to call people to prayer, the “muezzin” called from the circular tower.

Then, drive back to Al-Zubarah fort and enjoy this pristine example of a typical Arab fort built by H.H. Sheikh Abdullah bin Qassim Al Thani in 1938 on the ruins of an older castle that had been destroyed.

The Coast Guard used the sturdy fort as a station until the mid 1980s, when it was turned into a museum to display findings uncovered in the nearby Al-Zubarah archeological area.

It was constructed with high, thick walls that would last for countless decades and would serve to protect those inside. The fort is a regular square courtyard with massive walls on each side. Three of the corners have large circular towers topped

with Qatari-style battlements. The fourth corner contains a striking rectangular tower with traditional triangular-based ledges with slits called machicolations that - in the event of an attack - were used to shoot at enemies.

A visit to the fort would not be complete without climbing one of the external staircases in the courtyard to the second floor. This level consists of a wide promenade and a few rooms tucked inside the corner towers. The walls of these rooms feature groups of gunfire holes that are angled in different directions so the soldiers could shoot enemies who were attacking from all sides. Wooden rung stairs that are still in the towers enabled the men to climb up to the roof and patrol the surrounding area with a clear view.

Then, drive towards the coastline, about 200 meters past the Al-Zubarah fort, to enter Al-Zubarah town through the first gate on your right. Follow the path until you find the excavated areas.

The Al-Zubarah settlement shows evidence of a long-standing community where rich oyster banks and good trading connections in and beyond the Gulf ensured prosperity. Surrounded by a long wall belt and guard towers, the original town was 2,000 meters long and 600 meters wide. A separate quarter and a wider, more external wall were added later, and eventually houses were built outside of the walls.

The old town already existed in the early 17th century and today the area consists of long walls and two excavated sites. The first site was excavated between 1982 and 1984. Excavation on the second site began in 2002 and is still going on today. Most of the artifacts uncovered during the first season are on display in the Al-Zubarah fort.

Wrap up your visit with a picnic on the beach and a swim in the sea. Remember not to litter the archaeological area and bring any garbage back with you.

For more information on the North forts (Al-Thagab and Al-Rekayat), Al-Zubarah fort and the archaeological area of Al-Zubarah town, download the complete descriptions of the sites and bring them with you.