

This article is about the landmark mosque in Islamabad, Pakistan. For for the mosque in Sharjah, UAE, see King Faisal Mosque, Sharjah.

The Faisal Mosque (Urdu: فيصل مسجد, romanized: faisal masjid) is a mosque located in Islamabad, Pakistan. It is the sixth-largest mosque in the world and the largest within South Asia, located on the foothills of Margalla Hills in Pakistan's capital city of Islamabad. The mosque features a contemporary design consisting of eight sides of concrete shell and is inspired by the design of a typical Bedouin tent.[1]

A major tourist attraction in Pakistan, the mosque is a contemporary and influential piece of Islamic architecture.[2][3]

Construction of the mosque began in 1976 after a \$28 million grant from Saudi King Faisal, whose name the mosque bears.[4] The unconventional design by Turkish architect Vedat Dalokay was selected after an international competition.[5][2] Without a typical dome, the mosque is shaped like a Bedouin tent, surrounded by four 260 feet (79 m) tall minarets. The design features eight-sided shell shaped sloping roofs forming a triangular worship hall which can hold 10,000 worshippers.[6]

Combined the structure covers an area of 33 acres (130,000 m²; 1,400,000 sq ft), the mosque dominates the landscape of Islamabad.[4] It is situated at the north end of Faisal Avenue, putting it at the northernmost end of the city and at the foot of Margalla Hills, the westernmost foothills of the Himalayas. It is located on an elevated area of land against a picturesque backdrop of the national park. Faisal Mosque was the largest mosque in the world from 1986 until 1993 when it was overtaken by the mosques in Saudi Arabia. Faisal Mosque is now the fifth largest mosque in the world in terms of capacity.[7][1]

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History[edit]

The impetus for the mosque began in 1966 when King Faisal bin Abdul-Aziz supported the initiative of the Pakistani Government to build a national mosque in Islamabad during an official visit to Pakistan. In 1969, an international competition was held in which architects from 17 countries submitted 43 proposals. The winning design was that of Turkish architect Vedat Dalokay. Forty-six acres of land were assigned for the project and the execution was assigned to Pakistani engineers and workers.[8] Construction of the mosque began in 1976 by National Construction Limited of Pakistan, led by Azim Khan and was funded by the government of Saudi Arabia, at a cost of over 130 million Saudi riyals (approximately 120 million USD today). King Faisal bin Abdul Aziz was instrumental in the funding, and both the mosque and the road leading to it were named after him after his assassination in 1975. King Faisal bin Abdulaziz's successor King Khalid laid the foundation stone for the mosque

in October 1976[9] and signed the construction agreement in 1978. Basic information about the mosque can be found written on the foundation stone. On 18 June 1988, the first prayer was held, although the mosque was completed in 1986. The mosque grounds along with being a building for prayer also used to house the International Islamic University some years ago but has since relocated to a new campus in 2000. Some traditional and conservative Muslims criticized the design at first for its unconventional design and lack of a traditional dome structure.[2][10]

Capacity[edit]

The Faisal Mosque can accommodate about 300,000 worshippers. Each of the Mosque's four minarets are 79 m (259 ft) high (the tallest minarets in South Asia) and measure 10×10 metres in circumference.[10][2]

Architecture[edit]

I tried to capture the spirit, proportion, and geometry of Kaaba in a purely abstract manner. Imagine the apex of each of the four minarets as a scaled explosion of four highest corners of Kaaba – thus an unseen Kaaba form is bounded by the minarets at the four corners in a proportion of height to base. Shah Faisal Mosque is akin to the Holy Kaaba in the designer's imaginative eyes. Now, if you join the apex of each minaret to the base of the minaret diagonally opposite to it correspondingly, a four-sided pyramid shall be bound by these lines at the base side within that invisible cube. That lower level pyramid is treated as a solid body while four minarets with their apex complete the imaginary cube of Kaaba.

— Vedat Dalokay, "Dalokay further explains the thinking behind the design of the Masjid to students of a design school" [11][12][13]

Instead of using traditional domes, Vedat Dalokay designed an eight-sided main hall that looked like an Arab's Bedouin desert tent. Additionally, he added four minarets on all four corners of the main hall, which are of 80 m (260 ft) high, the tallest minarets in South Asia. The main structure of the building is the main prayer hall, which is supported by four concrete girders. The four unusual minarets are inspired by Turkish architecture. Vedat Dalokay also believed that the design of the Masjid represents Kaaba in an abstract manner.[14] Entrance is from the east, where the prayer hall is fronted by a courtyard with porticoes. The International Islamic University was housed under the main courtyard but now has relocated to a new campus. The mosque still houses a library, lecture hall, museum, and cafe. The interior of the main tent-shaped hall is covered in white marble and decorated with mosaics and calligraphy by the famous Pakistani artist Sadequain, and a spectacular Turkish-style chandelier. The mosaic pattern adorns the west wall and has the Kalimah written in early Kufic script, repeated in mirror image pattern.[3]

Awards and recognition[edit]

Aga Khan Award for Architecture was awarded to the architect for this mosque project.[13]

References in literature[edit]

The Faisal Mosque is described in the book *The Kite Runner* by Khalid Hosseini.[15] It is frequently referenced in the work of Michael Muhammad Knight, who came to the mosque to study Islam as a teenager.

Gallery[edit]

See also[edit]

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