

= Hajj =

The Hajj (/ hædʒ / ; Arabic : الحَجَّ " pilgrimage ") is an annual Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca , and a mandatory religious duty for Muslims that must be carried out at least once in their lifetime by all adult Muslims who are physically and financially capable of undertaking the journey , and can support their family during their absence . It is one of the five pillars of Islam , alongside Shahadah , Salat , Zakat , and Sawm . The Hajj is the largest annual gatherings of people in the world . The state of being physically and financially capable of performing the Hajj is called istita 'ah , and a Muslim who fulfills this condition is called a mustati . The Hajj is a demonstration of the solidarity of the Muslim people , and their submission to God (Allah) . The word Hajj means " to intend a journey " , which connotes both the outward act of a journey and the inward act of intentions .

The pilgrimage occurs from the 8th to 12th (or in some cases 13th) of Dhu al - al - Hijjah , the last month of the Islamic calendar . Because the Islamic calendar is lunar and the Islamic year is about eleven days shorter than the Gregorian year , the Gregorian date of Hajj changes from year to year . Ihram is the name given to the special spiritual state in which pilgrims wear two white sheets of seamless cloth and abstain from certain actions .

The Hajj is associated with the life of Islamic prophet Muhammad from the 7th century , but the ritual of pilgrimage to Mecca is considered by Muslims to stretch back thousands of years to the time of Abraham . During Hajj , pilgrims join processions of hundreds of thousands of people , who simultaneously converge on Mecca for the week of the Hajj , and perform a series of rituals : each person walks counter - clockwise seven times around the Ka 'aba (the cube - shaped building and the direction of prayer for the Muslims) , runs back and forth between the hills of Al - Safa and Al - Marwah , drinks from the Zamzam Well , goes to the plains of Mount Arafat to stand in vigil , spends a night in the plain of Muzdalifa , and performs symbolic stoning of the devil by throwing stones at three pillars . The pilgrims then shave their heads , perform a ritual of animal sacrifice , and celebrate the three - day global festival of Eid al - Adha .

Pilgrims can also go to Mecca to perform the rituals at other times of the year . This is sometimes called the " lesser pilgrimage " , or Umrah . However , even if they choose to perform the Umrah , they are still obligated to perform the Hajj at some other point in their lifetime if they have the means to do so .

= = History = =

The present pattern of Hajj was established by Muhammad . However , according to the Quran , elements of Hajj trace back to the time of Abraham , around 2000 BCE . According to Islamic tradition , Abraham was ordered by God to leave his wife Hagar (Hagar) and his son Ishmael alone in the desert of ancient Mecca . In search of water , Hagar desperately ran seven times between the two hills of Safa and Marwah but found none . Returning in despair to Ishmael , she saw the baby scratching the ground with his leg and a water fountain sprang forth underneath his foot . Later , Abraham was commanded to build the Kaaba (which he did with the help of Ishmael) and to invite people to perform pilgrimage there . The Quran refers to these incidents in verses 2 : 124 - 127 and 22 : 27 - 30 . It is said that the archangel Gabriel brought the Black Stone from Heaven to be attached to the Kaaba .

In pre - Islamic Arabia , a time known as jahiliyyah , the Kaaba became surrounded by pagan idols . In 630 CE , Muhammad led his followers from Medina to Mecca , cleansed the Kaaba by destroying all the pagan idols , and then reconsecrated the building to Allah . In 632 CE , Muhammad performed his only and last pilgrimage with a large number of followers , and instructed them on the rites of Hajj . It was from this point that Hajj became one of the five pillars of Islam .

During the medieval times , pilgrims would gather in big cities of Syria , Egypt , and Iraq to go to Mecca in groups and caravans comprising tens of thousands of pilgrims , often under state patronage . Hajj caravans , particularly with the advent of the Mamluk Sultanate and its successor , the Ottoman Empire , were escorted by a military force accompanied by physicians under the command of an amir al - hajj . This was done in order to protect the caravan from Bedouin

robbers or natural hazards , and to ensure that the pilgrims were supplied with the necessary provisions . Muslim travelers like Ibn Jubayr and Ibn Battuta have recorded detailed accounts of Hajj @-@ travels of medieval time . The caravans followed well @-@ established routes called in Arabic darb al @-@ hajj , lit . " pilgrimage road " , which usually followed ancient routes such as the King 's Highway .

= = Timing of Hajj = =

The date of Hajj is determined by the Islamic calendar (known as Hijri calendar or AH) , which is based on the lunar year . Every year , the events of Hajj take place in a five @-@ day period , starting on 8 and ending on 12 Dhul @-@ Hijjah , the twelfth and last month of the Islamic calendar . Among these five days , the 9th Dhul @-@ Hijjah is known as Day of Arafah , and this day is called the day of Hajj . Because the Islamic calendar is lunar and the Islamic year is about eleven days shorter than the Gregorian year , the Gregorian date for Hajj changes from year to year . Thus , each year in the Gregorian calendar , the pilgrimage starts eleven days (sometimes ten days) earlier than the preceding year . This makes it possible for the Hajj season to fall twice in one Gregorian year , and it does so every 33 years . The last time this phenomenon occurred was 2006 . The table below shows the Gregorian dates of Hajj of recent years (the dates correspond to 9 Dhul @-@ Hijjah of Hijri calendar) :

The approximate date for the next Hajj pilgrimage (1437 AH) is 11 September 2016 .

= = Rites = =

Fiqh literature describes in detail the manners of carrying out the rites of Hajj , and pilgrims generally follow handbooks and expert guides to successfully fulfill the requirements of Hajj . In performing the rites of hajj , the pilgrims not only follow the model of Muhammad , but also commemorate the events associated with Abraham .

= = = Ihram = = =

When the pilgrims reach the appropriate Miqat (depending on where they 're coming from) , they enter into a state of holiness ? known as Ihram ? that consists of wearing two white seamless cloths for the male , with the one wrapped around the waist reaching below the knee and the other draped over the left shoulder and tied at the right side ; wearing ordinary dress for the female that fulfills the Islamic condition of public dress with hands or face uncovered ; taking ablution ; declaring the intention (niyah) to perform pilgrimage and to refraining from certain activities such as clipping the nails , shaving any part of the body , having sexual relations ; using perfumes , damaging plants , killing animals , covering head (for men) or the face and hands (for women) ; getting married ; or carrying weapons . The ihram is meant to show equality of all pilgrims in front of God : there is no difference between the rich and the poor .

= = = Tawaf and sa 'ay = = =

The ritual of Tawaf involves walking seven times counterclockwise around the Kaaba . Upon arriving at Masjid al @-@ Haram , pilgrims perform an arrival tawaf either as part of Umrah or as a welcome tawaf . During tawaf , pilgrims also include Hateem ? an area at the north side of the Kaaba ? inside their path . Each circuit starts with the kissing or touching of the Black Stone (Hajar al- Aswad) . If kissing the stone is not possible because of the crowds , they may simply point towards the stone with their hand on each circuit . Eating is not permitted but the drinking of water is allowed , because of the risk of dehydration . Men are encouraged to perform the first three circuits at a hurried pace , known as Ramal , and the following four at a more leisurely pace .

The completion of Tawaf is followed by two Rakaat prayers at the Place of Abraham (Muqam Ibrahim) , a site near the Kaaba inside the mosque . However , again because of large crowds

during the days of Hajj , they may instead pray anywhere in the mosque . After prayer , pilgrims also drink water from the Zamzam well , which is made available in coolers throughout the Mosque .

Although the circuits around the Kaaba are traditionally done on the ground level , tawaf is now also performed on the first floor and roof of the mosque because of the large crowds .

Tawaf is followed by sa 'ay , running or walking seven times between the hills of Safa and Marwah , located near the Kaaba . Previously in open air , the place is now entirely enclosed by the Masjid al @-@ Haram mosque , and can be accessed via air @-@ conditioned tunnels . Pilgrims are advised to walk the circuit , though two green pillars mark a short section of the path where they run . There is also an internal " express lane " for the disabled . After sayee , the male pilgrims shave their heads and women generally clip a portion of their hair , which completes the Umrah .

= = = First day of Hajj : 8th Dhu al @-@ Hijjah = = =

On the 8th Dhu al @-@ Hijjah , the pilgrims are reminded of their duties . They again don the ihram garments and confirm their intention to make the pilgrimage . The prohibitions of ihram start now .

= = = Mina = = =

After the morning prayer on the 8th of Dhu al @-@ Hijjah , the pilgrims proceed to Mina where they spend the whole day and offer noon , afternoon , evening , and night prayers . The next morning after morning prayer , they leave Mina to go to Arafat .

= = = Second day : 9th Dhu al @-@ Hijjah = = =

= = = Arafat = = =

On 9th Dhu al @-@ Hijjah before noon , pilgrims arrive at Arafat , a barren and plain land some 20 kilometers east of Mecca , where they stand in contemplative vigil : they offer supplications , repent on and atone for their past sins , and seek mercy of God , and listen to sermon from the Islamic scholars who deliver it from near Jabal al @-@ Rahmah (The Mount of Mercy) from where Muhammad is said to have delivered his last sermon . Lasting from noon through sunset , this is known as ' standing before God ' (wuquf) , one of the most significant rites of Hajj . At Masjid al @-@ Namirah , pilgrims offer noon and afternoon prayers together at noon time . A pilgrim 's Hajj is considered invalid if they do not spend the afternoon on Arafat .

= = = Muzdalifah = = =

Pilgrims must leave Arafat for Muzdalifah after sunset without praying maghrib (evening) prayer at Arafat . Muzdalifah is an area between Arafat and Mina . Upon reaching there , pilgrims perform Maghrib and Isha prayer jointly , spend the night praying and sleeping on the ground with open sky , and gather pebbles for the next day 's ritual of the stoning of the Devil (Shaitan) .

= = = Third day : 10th Dhu al @-@ Hijjah = = =

After returning from Muzdalifah , the Pilgrims spend the night at Mina .

= = = Ramy al @-@ Jamarat = = =

Back at Mina , the pilgrims perform symbolic stoning of the devil (Ramy al @-@ Jamarat) by throwing seven stones at only the largest of the three pillars , known as Jamrat al @-@ Aqabah from sunrise to sunset . The remaining two pillars (jamarah) are not stoned on this day . These pillars are said to represent Satan . Pilgrims climb ramps to the multi @-@ levelled Jamaraat Bridge

, from which they can throw their pebbles at the jamarat . Because of safety reasons , in 2004 the pillars were replaced by long walls , with catch basins below to collect the pebbles .

===== Animal sacrifice =====

After the casting of stones , animals are slaughtered to commemorate the story of Abraham and Ishmael . Traditionally the pilgrims slaughtered the animal themselves , or oversaw the slaughtering . Today many pilgrims buy a sacrifice voucher in Mecca before the greater Hajj begins , which allows an animal to be slaughtered in their name on the 10th , without the pilgrim being physically present . Modern abattoirs complete the processing of the meat , which is then sent as charity to poor people around the world . At the same time as the sacrifices occur at Mecca , Muslims worldwide perform similar sacrifices , in a three @-@ day global festival called Eid al @-@ Adha .

===== Hair removal =====

After sacrificing an animal , another important rite of Hajj is shaving head or trimming hair (known as Halak) . All male pilgrims shave their head or trim their hair on the day of Eid al Adha and women pilgrims cut the tips of their hair .

===== Tawaf Al @-@ Ifadah =====

On the same or the following day , the pilgrims re @-@ visit the Masjid al @-@ Haram mosque in Mecca for another tawaf , known as Tawaf al @-@ Ifadah , an essential part of Hajj . It symbolizes being in a hurry to respond to God and show love for Him , an obligatory part of the Hajj . The night of the 10th is spent back at Mina .

===== Fourth day : 11th Dhu al @-@ Hijjah =====

Starting from noon to sunset on the 11 Dhu al @-@ Hijjah (and again the following day) , the pilgrims again throw seven pebbles at each of the three pillars in Mina . This is commonly known as the " Stoning of the Devil " .

===== Fifth day : 12th Dhu al @-@ Hijjah =====

On 12 Dhu al @-@ Hijjah , the same process of stoning of the pillars as of 11 Dhu al @-@ Hijjah takes place . Pilgrims may leave Mina for Mecca before sunset on the 12th .

===== Last day at Mina : 13th Dhu al @-@ Hijjah =====

If unable to leave on the 12th before sunset or opt to stay at free will , they must perform the stoning ritual again on the 13th before returning to Mecca .

===== Tawaf al @-@ Wadaa =====

Finally , before leaving Mecca , pilgrims perform a farewell tawaf called the Tawaf al @-@ Wadaa . ' Wadaa ' means ' to bid farewell ' . The pilgrims circle the Kaaba seven times counter @-@ clockwise , and if they can , attempt to touch or kiss the Kaaba .

===== Journey to Medina =====

Though not a part of Hajj , pilgrims may choose to travel to the city of Medina and the Al @-@ Masjid an @-@ Nabawi (Mosque of the Prophet) , which contains Muhammad 's tomb . The Quba Mosque and Masjid al @-@ Qiblatayn are also usually visited .

= = Arrangement and facilities = =

Making necessary arrangements each year for the growing number of pilgrims poses a logistic challenge for the government of Saudi Arabia , which has , since the 1950s , spent more than \$ 100 billion to increase pilgrimage facilities . Major issues like housing , transportation , sanitation , and health care have been addressed and improved greatly by the government by introducing various development programs , with the result that pilgrims now enjoy modern facilities and perform various rites at ease . The Saudi government often sets quota for various countries to keep the pilgrims ' number at a manageable level , and arranges huge security forces and CCTV cameras to maintain overall safety during Hajj . Various institutions and government programs , such as the Haj subsidy offered in India or the Tabung Haji based in Malaysia assist pilgrims in covering the costs of the journey . For 2014 Hajj , special Hajj information desks were set up at Pakistani airports to assist the pilgrims .

= = Transportation = =

Pilgrims generally travel to Hajj in groups . During the early 19th century , numbers undertaking the traditional overland pilgrimage within caravans began to diminish as many pilgrims began arriving in Mecca by steamship . This continued for some time , until air travel came to predominate ; Egypt introduced the first airline service for Hajj pilgrims in 1937 . Today , many airlines and travel agents offer Hajj packages , and arrange for transportation and accommodation for the pilgrims . King Abdulaziz International Airport in Jeddah and Prince Mohammad Bin Abdulaziz Airport in Medina have dedicated pilgrim terminals to assist the arrival of pilgrims . Other international airports around the world , such as Indira Gandhi in New Delhi , Rajiv Gandhi International Airport in Hyderabad , Jinnah in Karachi and Soekarno @-@ Hatta in Jakarta also have dedicated terminals or temporary facilities to service pilgrims as they depart and return home . During Hajj , many airlines run extra flights to accommodate the large number of pilgrims .

= = Modern crowd @-@ control problems = =

Pilgrim numbers have greatly increased in recent years , which has led to numerous accidents and deaths due to overcrowding . The first major accident during Hajj in modern times occurred in 1990 , when a tunnel stampede led to the death of 1 @,@ 462 people . Afterwards , various crowd @-@ control techniques were adopted to ensure safety . Because of large crowds , some of the rituals have become more symbolic . For example , it is no longer necessary to kiss the Black Stone . Instead , pilgrims simply point at it on each circuit around the Kaaba . Also , the large pillars used for pebble throwing were changed into long walls in 2004 with basins below to catch the stones . Another example is that animal sacrifice is now done by appropriate Saudi authority at appointed slaughterhouses without the pilgrims being present there .

Even with these crowd control techniques , there are still many incidents during the Hajj as pilgrims are trampled or ramps collapse under the weight of the many visitors . During 2015 Hajj , a stampede resulted in 769 deaths and injuries to 934 others , according to the Saudi authorities . A report from Associated Press totalled at least 1470 fatalities from official reports from other countries , making it the most deadly such episode to date . Concerns were raised in 2013 and 2014 about the spread of MERS because of mass gatherings during the Hajj . Saudi Health Minister Abdullah Al @-@ Rabia said authorities have detected no cases of MERS among the pilgrims so far . He also said that , despite few cases of MERS , Saudi Arabia was ready for the 2014 pilgrimage .

= = Significance = =

To the Muslims , Hajj is associated with religious as well as social significance . Apart from being an obligatory religious duty , Hajj is seen to have a spiritual merit that provides the Muslims with an

opportunity of self @-@ renewal . Hajj serves as a reminder of the Day of Judgment when Muslims believe people will stand before God . Hadith literature (sayings of Muhammad) articulates various merits a pilgrim achieves upon successful completion of their Hajj . After successful pilgrimage , pilgrims can prefix their names with the title ' Al @-@ Hajji ' , and are held with respect in Muslim society . However , Islamic scholars suggest Hajj should signify a Muslim 's religious commitment , and should not be a measurement of their social status . Hajj brings together and unites the Muslims from different parts of the world irrespective of their race , colour , and culture , which acts as a symbol of equality .

A 2008 study on the impact of participating in the Islamic pilgrimage found that Muslim communities become more positive and tolerant after Hajj experience . Titled Estimating the Impact of the Hajj : Religion and Tolerance in Islam 's Global Gathering and conducted in conjunction with Harvard University 's John F. Kennedy School of Government , the study noted that the Hajj " increases belief in equality and harmony among ethnic groups and Islamic sects and leads to more favorable attitudes toward women , including greater acceptance of female education and employment " and that " Hajjis show increased belief in peace , and in equality and harmony among adherents of different religions . "

Malcolm X , an American civil rights activist , describes the sociological atmosphere he experienced at his Hajj in the 1960s as follows :

There were tens of thousands of pilgrims , from all over the world . They were of all colors , from blue @-@ eyed blondes to black @-@ skinned Africans . But we were all participating in the same ritual , displaying a spirit of unity and brotherhood that my experiences in America had led me to believe never could exist between the white and the non @-@ white . America needs to understand Islam , because this is the one religion that erases from its society the race problem . You may be shocked by these words coming from me . But on this pilgrimage , what I have seen , and experienced , has forced me to rearrange much of my thought patterns previously held .

= = Number of pilgrims per year = =

There has been a substantial increase in the number of pilgrims during the last 92 years , and the number of foreign pilgrims has increased by approximately 2 @,@ 824 percent , from 58 @,@ 584 in 1920 to 1 @,@ 712 @,@ 962 in 2012 . Because of development and expansion work at Masjid al @-@ Haram , the authority restricted the number of pilgrims in 2013 . The following number of pilgrims arrived in Saudi Arabia each year to perform Hajj .

= = Gallery = =