

Visiting the Mosque

Simple guidance for visitors

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BIRMINGHAM
CENTRAL MOSQUE

THE MOSQUE

Welcome to Birmingham Central Mosque

A **Mosque** is an Islamic place of worship and a centre of learning for **Muslims**. A Muslim is a person who follows the religion of **Islam**.

It is the second largest religion in the world. In **1969** work started to build a Mosque for the growing community of Muslims in Birmingham.

After years of hard work and immense fundraising, in **1975**, it was completed. Birmingham Central Mosque is one of the largest Mosques in the UK and Europe with spaces for well over **6000** people. It has served the community well. Since 2020 a major project was started to enlarge and upgrade the building to meet requirements and demands of a 21st century Mosque.

People come to the Mosque to pray, to learn and to strengthen their faith. There are prayer halls, offices, ablution areas and community areas for

weddings, funerals, lectures and special occasions such as festivals. There are also classrooms for **Madrasah** purposes. Madrasah is the Arabic for a place of learning.

At the Mosque

The Mosque may be identified by the **Dome** and the **Minaret**. The minaret is the tall tower attached to the Mosque. It was traditionally used by a **Muaz'zin**. This is a person who makes a 'Call to Prayer' in Arabic.

The Muaz'zin calls the worshippers to the Mosque reminding them to pray five times a day. The 'Call to Prayer' is called the **Azaan**. It periodically emanates from the Mosque, for the five obligatory prayers. It is always called out live, inviting the Muslims to pray. The prayer can be heard loud and clear throughout the Mosque and at home via a radio system. It can also be heard externally for the prayers which take place during the daytime.

The Dome and Minaret have also developed into a visual symbol for recognising a Mosque.



The star within a crescent moon, which can be seen on top of the Dome, has become a symbol of Islam. The Muslim calendar is based on the lunar months.

In the prayer hall, you will see a niche called a **Mihraab**, which shows the direction of the **Ka'bah** in **Makkah**. Muslims turn to pray towards Makkah five times a day, throughout the world. The direction itself is called the

Qiblah. Prayers are led by the **Imam** who stands at the front and leads facing Qiblah or stands on raised steps (pulpit) called the **Mimbar** which is situated on the right of the Mihraab, to deliver a sermon on Fridays. From here he can address everyone and can be seen by all. Guided by the Imam, Muslims learn from the **Qur'an**, how to grow stronger in faith and get closer to **Allah** (God).

The Qur'an is the word of Allah and the holy book for Muslims. It is miraculously memorised by millions of Muslims around the world.

The **Wudhu** area, which is also known as the ablution area, is a place where worshippers can wash themselves before prayers in a particular way. The Mosque has a dedicated ablution area, for both men and women with underground heated floors.

Wudhu is required for all daily prayers and for touching the Qur'an.

There are separate prayer spaces and entrances for men and women.

As Islam is a global religion, in different cultures, Muslims wear different styles of modest clothing to show respect for Allah. Women usually wear a **Hijab**, which is Arabic for 'veil.' This covers the head and hair. A fuller veil is called a **Niqab** which covers the face and a full body veil is called an **Abayah**.

Muslim men often wear a hat which is called a **Topi**. They wear it when they pray to show commitment to the faith and respect. Shoes are removed at the entrance as a mark of respect.

Prayer Hall

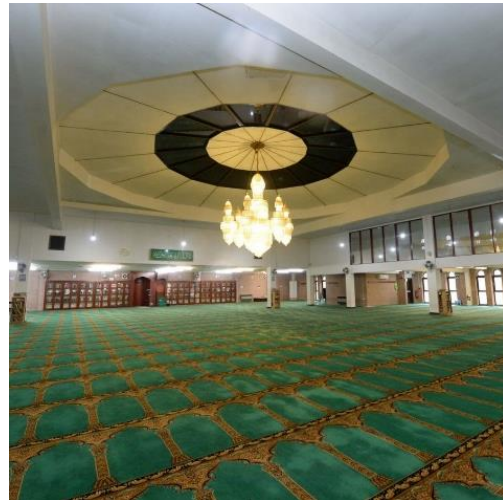
The Mosque itself has got three floors. The ground floor is divided into areas providing office accommodation, a community hall, educational classrooms and a large hall area which is used for prayers and other activities.

On the first floor there is a large main hall for prayers which can accommodate over 3000 worshippers at any one time.

In addition to that there is a ladies' gallery on the second floor which can accommodate around 1500 women.

Everyone is equal in the House of Allah. This action helps Muslims to connect with Allah and with all Muslims throughout the world. They stand in straight rows, shoulder to shoulder, bow and kneel to submit to the will of Allah. They seek peace and the pleasure of Allah as they worship.

On special days like **Eid**, when the demand is high, the main prayer hall, the gallery and the community hall are all used for prayers.





On Eid day, there are five prayer services during which between 20k to 25k worshippers attend the Mosque for these prayers.

Allah cannot be seen and has no physical form. You will not see any images or portraits in the Mosque of any living things such as humans or animals.

Arabic is written from right to left. Arabic calligraphy has a special importance in Islam. Islamic art also has a rich tradition of decorating books and walls with geometric patterns.

Friday Prayers

Friday is the holiest day of the week when Muslims attend the Mosque for **Jummah** prayers at noon. On average the congregation on Fridays is around 4,000 plus which varies depending on the time of the year.

Community and Education

The community area is a multipurpose space which includes a hall where lectures, exhibitions, conferences, weddings and bereavement services are held and an area where people come together for events such as Eid and other special celebrations.

Education is very important at the Mosque. Children come to the Madrasah on weekday evenings or daytimes at the weekend, to learn about Islam and how to read the Qur'an in Arabic.

Other items such as chandeliers are used as well to enhance the interiors.

Services provided

- Marriage Bureau & Introductions
- Family Support Service
- Religious Education visits
- Evening School for children
- Food Bank
- Funeral Services & Mortuary
- Workshops for adults
- Hiring facilities for private functions.
- Islamic Marriage (Nikah)
- Marriage civil ceremony
- Faith Conversion Services
- Revert classes
- Live Jummah broadcast
- Scouts
- Summer Youth Activities
- External Call to Prayers
- Daily Iftars in Ramadan
- Ask the Imam
- Marriages for deaf community
- Events for autistic community
- Hot food kitchen
- Humanitarian fundraising
- Zakah and Qurbani distribution
- Clothes Bank collection
- Interfaith Connections
- Summer Fun Days
- Visitor Open Days
- Coffee Mornings
- Female Prayer facilities
- Cafeteria
- Islamic Exhibitions & Conferences
- Training Opportunities
- Monthly newsletter
- Live stream radio
- Welcoming civic officials and dignitaries
- Accessible Facilities



THE VISIT

What can I expect when I visit the Mosque on an Open Day?

Every visit offers a unique experience, and you can be confident of a warm welcome by volunteers. You can expect guided tours of the building, educational videos being played, exhibitions, posters and literature showcased and not to forget that there will many other lovely visitors like yourself, who will be curious to learn.

Can you eat or drink in the Mosque?

A chat over a cup of tea or refreshments is an integral part of the visit experience. There will be a designated area away from the main prayer hall for eating and drinking. Alcohol and pork are not permitted within the Mosque. Any food or drink brought into the Mosque is always **halal**. Halal is Arabic for permissible and here it refers to food that Muslims are allowed to consume.

What do I wear to the Mosque?

Muslims expect guests to respect the sacredness of the building and its worshippers, especially in the prayer hall. Dress modestly, with both men and women covering their shoulders and legs. Women may cover their heads if they wish to enrich their own experience through headscarves. You may bring your own or they are sometimes available to borrow. Everyone must remove their shoes before entering prayer areas.

You can show respect by silencing your phone and speaking softly, particularly in the prayer hall.

Can I take photos?

Yes. You are welcome to take pictures of the Mosque and the artefacts to take memories and learning with you. However, remember to ask permission from people in the Mosque before photographing them.

Is it ok to shake hands?

People of the same gender often shake hands or even hug, and with the opposite gender, a smile is welcome, alongside placing your hand over your heart.

However, when greeting someone of another gender, follow the other person's lead.

Many may not prefer to shake hands. In such cases, a suitable alternative is to put your hand over your heart with a slight nod. It's a universal sign of respect and makes people smile. Remember, don't worry about not getting things 100% right; as long as you're being respectful and observant, that would more than suffice.

What can I say when I meet Muslims in the Mosque?

You are welcome to say *As Salamu-Alay-Kum* (peace be unto you) as this is the greeting Muslims use when meeting.

If someone greets you with *As Salamu-Alay-Kum*, you can reply by saying *Wa-Alay-Kum Salaam* (peace be unto you as well). But generally, you can greet as you would do anywhere with hi or hello.

Conclusion

In closing, a visit to a Mosque can be a rich and enlightening experience, a chance to explore a different religion and culture. Don't be so worried about doing the "right" or "wrong" thing that you miss the chance to connect with someone different from you. You may actually find that you have more things in common than not.

By following these etiquettes and tips, you can ensure that your visit is respectful and enjoyable. Mosques are open to all, promoting the values of hospitality, inclusivity, and understanding. Come with an open heart and a curious mind, you'll be warmly welcomed and will leave with a lasting and delightful experience.

THE RELIGION

Muslims believe there is one true God, **Allah**, and Muhammad is the final messenger of God.

Prophet Muhammad is so respected that it is usual for Muslims to say *Sallallahu alayhi wasallam* which stands for 'Peace be upon him' after his name or write PBUH.

Five pillars of Islam

These are the five key practices in Islam for Muslims to fulfil so that they can lead pious and responsible lives. They are asked to put their beliefs into practice by performing certain acts of worship.

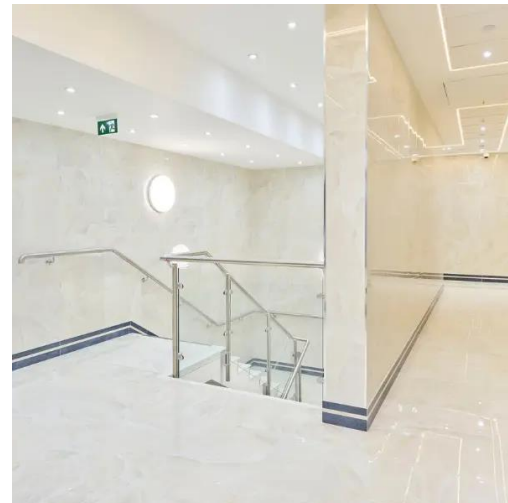
Shahada (Declaration of Faith) 'There is no deity except Allah and Muhammad is the messenger of Allah. Repeated many times during the day and in prayers.

Salah (Daily prayer) Pray five times a day before dawn, noon, late afternoon,

sunset and night. This includes bowing, prostrating and recitation of prayers for the purpose of spirituality, contemplation and closeness to Allah. Friday noon prayers are special to Muslims.

Sawm (Fasting) During the month of **Ramadan**, which means refraining from eating, drinking and sexual activity from dawn to dusk.

Zakat (Charity) Muslims are encouraged to give 2.5% of their wealth annually to benefit the poor and needy and to give as much as they can voluntarily.



Hajj (Pilgrimage to Makkah) Ka'bah, is a cubic structure in the centre of the Great Mosque in Makkah and is considered by Muslims to be the most sacred spot on earth. If they can afford it, every Muslim is required to make a pilgrimage to Makkah in Saudi Arabia, at least once in their lifetime.

Qur'an

The Qur'an is the holy book for Muslims. It is the focus of worship. You will see many copies of the Qur'an on shelves in the Mosque where it is read, studied and memorised. The Qur'an is always treated with great respect by Muslims in their homes as well as in the Mosque.

The language of the Qur'an is Arabic which is written from right to left. In prayers, verses (or **Ayahs** in Arabic) from the Qur'an are recited. The Qur'an has over 6000 verses divided into 30 equal parts and 114 chapters (or **Surahs** in Arabic).

Muslims believe that the early words of the Qur'an were revealed by the Angel **Jibreel** (Gabriel) to the Prophet Muhammad PBUH in a cave in the desert of Makkah in Saudi Arabia, over 1400 years ago.

It took 23 years for the entire Qur'an to be completed. The words will remain unchanged until the **Day of Judgement**. Muslims believe the Qur'an is Allah's last and final words. It provides Muslims with complete guidance about how they should live their lives.





Festivals

There are two official holidays in the Islamic lunar calendar: **Eid ul-Fitr** and **Eid ul-Adha**.

Ramadan is a time when Muslims remember the month the Qur'an was first revealed to Prophet Muhammad PBUH. For a whole month, Muslims do not eat or drink and refrain from sexual activity, from sunrise to sunset. This is known as fasting. Children are not expected to fast until they reach the age of puberty. Muslims give up bad habits, do good deeds, give charity and care for their family, friends and

community. They read the Qur'an and attend special prayers at night called **Taraweeh** prayers. Eid ul-Fitr celebrates the end of Ramadan.

Eid ul-Adha is a very important Festival of Sacrifice. Muslims remember Prophet **Ibrahim's** (Peace be upon Him) willingness to sacrifice his son on the orders of Allah. Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) was tempted but was strong and was prepared to submit to the will of Allah. At the last minute, Allah intervened and a ram was sent from Allah and was sacrificed instead. This sacrifice is remembered at Eid ul-Adha. It marks the end of Hajj, the annual pilgrimage to Makkah when Muslims renew and strengthen their faith.

There are special Eid prayers where Muslims give thanks to Allah. On Eid day Muslims flock to the Mosque and meet and greet everyone after the prayers. They have a special meal with family and friends. People give gifts, dress in their best clothes and give money to children and for charity.



Birmingham Central Mosque

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www.centralmosque.org.uk