

Hajj Briefing

For Muslims, the Hajj is the fifth and final **pillar of Islam**. It occurs in the month of Dhul Hijjah which is the twelfth month of the Islamic lunar calendar. It is the journey that every sane adult Muslim must undertake **at least once** in their lives if they can afford it and are physically able. Vast improvement in and around Mecca and Kaaba has meant that pilgrims with a disability can take part in the pilgrimage.

Once a year, Muslims of every ethnic group, colour, social status, and culture gather together in Mecca and stand before the Kaaba praising Allah together.

It is a ritual that is designed to promote the bonds of Islamic brotherhood and sisterhood by showing that everyone is equal in the eyes of Allah.

The Hajj makes Muslims feel real importance of life here on earth, and the afterlife, by stripping away all markers of social status, wealth, and pride. In the Hajj all are truly equal.

The Hajjis or pilgrims wear simple white clothes called Ihram. During the Hajj the Pilgrims perform acts of worship and they renew their sense of purpose in the world.

Hajj a Brief history

Around four thousand years ago the valley of Mecca was a dry and uninhabited place.

Muslims believe the Prophet **Ibrahim** (Abraham) was instructed to bring his wife, Hajira (Hagar) and their child Is'mail to Arabia from Palestine.

Allah told the Prophet Ibrahim to leave them on their own, and he did so, with some supplies of food and water. However the supplies quickly ran out and within a few days Hajira and Is'mail were suffering from hunger and dehydration.

In her desperation Hajira ran up and down two hills called Safa and Marwa trying to see if she could spot any help in the distance. Finally she collapsed beside Is'mail and prayed to Allah for deliverance.

Is'mail struck his foot on the ground and this caused a spring of water to gush forth from the earth. Hajira and Is'mail were saved. Now they had a secure water supply they were able to trade water with passing nomads for food and supplies.

As the years passed Is'mail was blessed with Prophethood and he gave the nomads of the desert the message of surrender to Allah.

After many centuries, Mecca became a thriving city thanks to its reliable water source, the well of Zam Zam.

Gradually, the people began to adopt polytheistic ideas, and worship spirits and many different gods. The shrine of the Prophet Ibrahim was used to store idols.

After many years, Allah told the **Prophet Muhammed** that he should restore the Kaaba to the worship of Allah only.

In the year 628 the Prophet Muhammed set out on a journey with 1400 of his followers. This was the first pilgrimage in Islam, and would re-establish the religious traditions of the Prophet Ibrahim.

Annual Leave request to observe the Hajj Pilgrimage

An employer should sympathetically consider requests for leave to observe Hajj and religious festivals where it is reasonable and practically possible for the employee to be allowed that leave, and they have sufficient holiday entitlement.

Future Hajj Dates:

2017:

30 August - 4 September (dates may vary 1 or 2days)

2018:

19 August – 22 August ((dates may vary 1 or 2days)

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