

FESTIVAL INFO

FESTIVAL.COM

THE HAJJ

The **Hajj** ([/hædʒ/](#)^[1] [Arabic](#): [حَجّ](#) *Hajj* "[pilgrimage](#)"; sometimes also spelled **Hadj**, **Hadji** or **Haj** in English) is an annual [Islamic pilgrimage](#) to [Mecca](#), [Saudi Arabia](#),^[2] the [holiest city](#) for [Muslims](#). Hajj is 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 of supporting their family during their absence from home.^{[3][4][5]}

In Islamic terminology, Hajj is a pilgrimage made to the [Kaaba](#), the "House of God", in the sacred city of Mecca in Saudi Arabia. It is one of the [Five Pillars of Islam](#), alongside [Shahadah](#), [Salat](#), [Zakat](#) and [Sawm](#) or fasting of Ramadan. The Hajj is a demonstration of the solidarity of the Muslim people, and their submission to [God](#) ([Allah](#)).^{[6][7]} The word Hajj means "to attend a journey", which connotes both the outward act of a journey and the inward act of intentions.^[8]

The rites of pilgrimage are performed over five to six days, extending from the 8th to the 12th or 13th^[9] of [Dhu al-Hijjah](#), the last month of the [Islamic](#)

[calendar](#).^[10] 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. In 2021 AD (1442 [AH](#)), Dhu al-Hijjah extends from 11 July to 8 August.

The Hajj is associated with the life of [Islamic prophet Muhammad](#) from the 7th century AD, 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 millions 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 [Kaaba](#) (a cube-shaped building and the [direction of prayer](#) for Muslims), trots (walks briskly) back and forth between the hills of [Safa and Marwah](#) seven times, then 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. After the sacrifice of an animal (can be accomplished by using a voucher (see below)), the Pilgrims then are required to

CONTENT

- ABOUT THIS EVENT
- HISTORY

either shave or trim their heads (male) or trim the ends of their hair (female). A celebration of the three-day global festival of [Eid al-Adha](#) proceeds thereafter.^{[11][12][13][14]}

Muslims may also undertake an [Umrah](#) ([Arabic](#): [عُمْرَة](#)), or "lesser pilgrimage" to Mecca at other times of the year. But this is not a substitute for the Hajj and Muslims are still obligated to perform the Hajj at some other point in their lifetime if they have the means to do so.^[15]

According to the official published statistics between 2000 and 2019,^{[16][17][18]} the average number of attendees is 2,269,145 per year, in which 1,564,710 come from outside Saudi Arabia and 671,983 are local. The year 2012 marks the highest number of participants with 3,161,573.^[19]

In June 2020, while not cancelling the Hajj outright, the Saudi Government announced that they would only welcome ["very limited](#)

[numbers" of pilgrims](#) who are residents of Saudi Arabia due to the global [COVID-19 pandemic](#).^[20] Similar restrictions applied in 2021,

but women were permitted to attend without a male guardian (*mehrem*) provided they went in a trustworthy group

HISTORY

The present pattern of Hajj was established by [Muhammad](#).^[25] However, according to the [Quran](#), elements of Hajj trace back to the time of [Abraham](#). According to Islamic tradition, Abraham was ordered by God to leave his wife [Hajar](#) and his son [Ishmael](#) alone in the desert of ancient Mecca. In search of water, Hajar 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.^[26] Later, Abraham was commanded to build the [Kaaba](#) (which he did with the help of Ishmael) and to invite people to perform pilgrimage

there.^[27] The [Quran](#) refers to these incidents in verses [2:124–127](#) and [22:27–30](#).^[n.1] It is said that the archangel [Gabriel](#) brought the [Black Stone](#) from Heaven to be attached to the Kaaba.^[27]

In pre-Islamic Arabia, a time known as [jahiliyyah](#), the Kaaba became surrounded by [pagan idols](#).^[28] In 630 AD, Muhammad led his followers from [Medina](#) to Mecca, cleansed the Kaaba by destroying all the pagan idols, and then consecrated the building to God.^[29] In 632 AD, Muhammad performed his only and last pilgrimage with a large number of followers, and instructed them on the rites of Hajj.^[30] It was from this point that Hajj became one of the five pillars of Islam.

During medieval times, pilgrims would gather in the big cities of Syria, Egypt, and Iraq to go to Mecca in groups and caravans

comprising tens of thousands of pilgrims,^[31] often under state patronage.^[32] 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](#).^{[33][34]} This was done to protect the caravan from [Bedouin](#) robbers or natural hazards,^{[n.2][33][34]} and to ensure that the pilgrims were supplied with the necessary provisions.^[33] Muslim travelers like [Ibn Jubayr](#) and [Ibn Battuta](#) have recorded detailed accounts of Hajj-travels of medieval time.^[35] 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](#).

