

Pilgrimage

Pilgrimage is a fundamental element in the religious practice of the three monotheistic religions: Christianity, Judaism and Islam. In Islam, pilgrimage (al-Hajj), is a religious duty that forms the fifth and final pillar of Islam, the others being: the Profession of the Faith (Shahada: 'there is no god but Allah and Muhammad is the messenger of Allah'; the five daily prayers; zakat or almsgiving; and fasting during the Islamic month of Ramadan. The Qur'an describes the Hajj and instructs: 'And Hajj to the Ka'ba is a duty that mankind owes to Allah.' (III: 97), while the Prophet's Traditions (Sunna) further elaborate on the details. Consequently, every Muslim, who is physically able and who has the necessary resources must perform the Hajj at least once in a lifetime. According to Muslim belief the sanctuary (Haram; that is the Holy Precinct at Mecca) was originally built by Abraham and his son Isma'il (also known as Ishmael), both of whom were venerated prior to Islam, just as they were following its emergence. When the faith of Islam emerged, religious pilgrimage came to be practiced with clearly defined rituals specified in the Qur'an and in the Sunna. The Islamic pilgrimage with its complex rituals takes place in the two Islamic months of Dhu al-Qa'ada and Dhu al-Hijja. The pilgrimage begins with adopting a state of purity by abandoning ordinary clothes and adopting ihram, a uniform outfit of two white un-sewn pieces of cloth, worn by all men, rich or poor (for women the garments are sewn). For the duration of the Hajj period the believer must remain pure, both spiritually and physically. In the Haram at Mecca, pilgrims walk around the Holy Ka'ba seven times (Tawaf) before performing al-Sa'yi, a ritual walk between two hills within the mosque complex known as al-Safaa and al-Marwah. On the ninth day of Dhu al-Hijja pilgrims assemble on Mount Arafat to pray and ask Allah for forgiveness. The Hajj culminates in Eid al-Adha (the Feast of Sacrifice) on the tenth day of Dhu al-Hijja, the most important Muslim festival. The Hajj is the greatest experience in a Muslim's lifetime and affords believers the possibility to ask for forgiveness of their sins and return to their lives renewed and purified.



Ceramic tile panel
Hegira 1087 / AD 1676
Ottoman
Museum of Islamic Art
Cairo, Egypt



Haram al-Sharif (Noble Sanctuary)
Hegira 15–493 / AD 637–1099; AH 583–1336 / AD 1187–1917
A series of consecutive Islamic periods ranging from the Umayyad to the Ottoman dynasties
Jerusalem



Prayer rug
Hegira 1217 / AD 1802
Ottoman
Burrell Collection, Glasgow
Museums
Glasgow, Scotland, United Kingdom