

THE MOSQUE IN ISLAM

Place of Worship and Remembrance of Allah

Mosques are special places of worship for Muslims. Five times every day Muslims meet in the mosque and pray together; standing before God, bowing and prostrating to Him.

A Muslim does not belong to a mosque in the way that a Christian might belong to a specific church. Any Muslim can use any mosque although, naturally, the nearness of one's home or place of work will often influence which mosque a person attends.

For Muslims, the offering of prayers is not confined within the four walls of a mosque. They can pray in places other than the Mosque as well.

"All of the Earth is a Mosque"

Prayer must be done at specific times. So, when it is time for prayer, and a Muslim cannot go or get to the mosque, he/she may do it at home, in the office or any clean place. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said: "The whole earth has been made a mosque for me."



Muslims at prayer



The whole earth is a Mosque

Who Owns the Mosque?

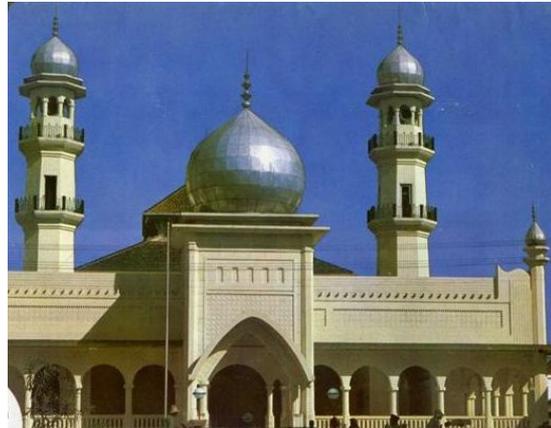
The building used as a mosque and everything inside it is consecrated in the name of God and its ownership should not be vested in any individual or organisation. For this reason, a mosque cannot be sold, mortgaged or rented for any purpose. This may not be applicable to a building which has been converted for use as a mosque as a temporary measure. In non-Muslim societies, it may be difficult to get permission to build mosques and so other buildings are converted by the Muslim community.

The Building of a Mosque:

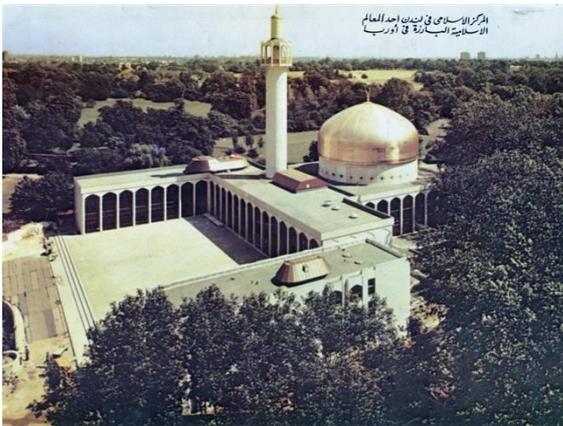
The architecture of mosques the world over is often very beautiful, with large domes and minarets (towers). There is no single design which must be used for all mosques but there are certain features which will almost always be present.



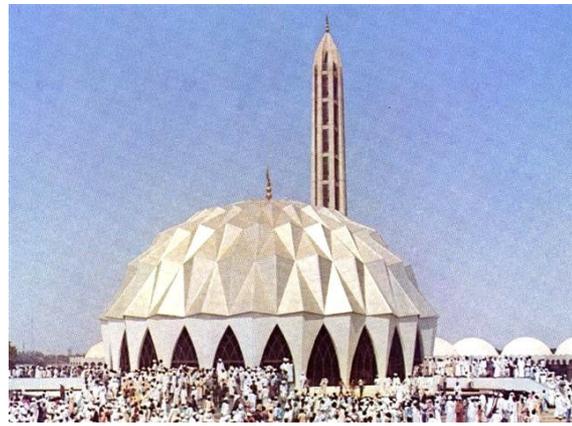
Quba Mosque – Saudi Arabia



Mosque in Indonesia



Central Mosque- London



Neilain Mosque -Sudan

Mihrab

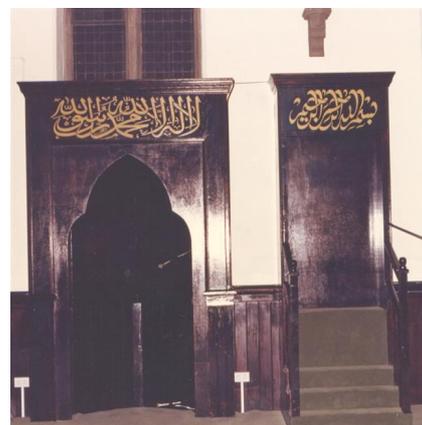
One wall of the mosque (front) must face towards the Ka'bah in Makkah (in Arabia) and this is the wall which is marked by the mihrab, a niche (a shallow space set back from the line of the wall) in the wall which indicates the direction people must face when they are at prayer. Muslims all over the world turn to face in the direction of the Ka'bah in Makkah at the time of prayer. This unites the Muslim community and demonstrates uniformity of devotion.



Mihrab



Minbar



Mihrab & Minbar of Dublin Mosque

Minbar

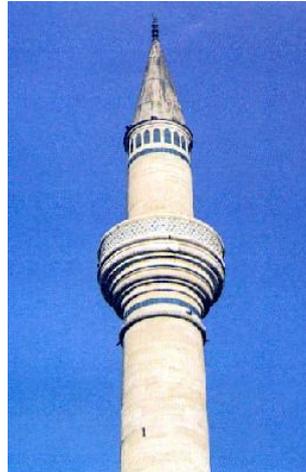
To the right of the mihrab is the minbar, a platform with steps. It is from the minbar that the Imam who leads the prayer addresses the worshippers in what is called the Khutbah (sermon) on Fridays and Eid days (two Muslim festivals).

Minaret

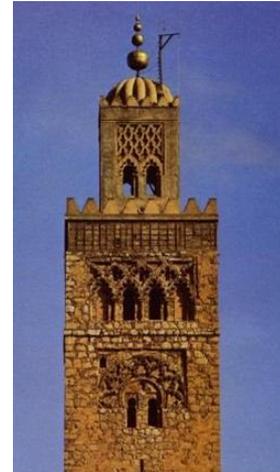
Some mosques have slender towers called minarets. From the minarets, the mu'adhdhin (Caller to prayer) makes Adhan (the call to prayer) five times a day so that all the people around can hear and go to the mosque for the prayer. Nowadays, loudspeakers are used.



Egyptian Minaret



Ottoman Minaret - Turkey



Moroccan Minaret

Dome

Some mosques have domes. A dome is a circular structure in the roof creating a hollow when you look from inside the mosque.

Decoration

There are no pictures, statues or photographs in a mosque. Usually, you will find verses from the Qu'ran in beautiful Arabic calligraphy. The aim at all times should be towards simplicity so that there are no distractions from the main purpose of the mosque, that is, worship.

Washing Facilities

Mosques have special rooms attached to them where worshippers do wudu or ablution (the washing of particular parts of the body in a particular way) before doing the prayer. Some mosques have fountains for the purpose of wudu.

Women's Section

Mosques have special sections or galleries for women who pray separately from men.

Who Can Lead the Prayers?

As there is no priesthood in Islam, any Muslim who knows the essentials of prayer can lead the congregational prayer in a mosque. However, people choose the best person to be their leader who excels the rest in Qur'anic knowledge and righteousness. Therefore, an Imam is chosen who is well versed in Islamic law but it does not mean that only such a person can lead prayers or perform other religious ceremonies. Any Muslim who has the knowledge can do so as well.

The Use of a Mosque

Although essentially a place of worship, a mosque can be used as a centre for educational and social welfare as well as a local Muslim community centre.

Removing One's Shoes Before Entering the Mosque:

Shoes are not worn in the mosque. There is no religious significance in removing one's shoes before entering the mosque. The idea is to keep the mosque clean and not to bring dirt from outside as people sit on the floor and also prostrate during the prayers.

The Three Most Important Mosques:

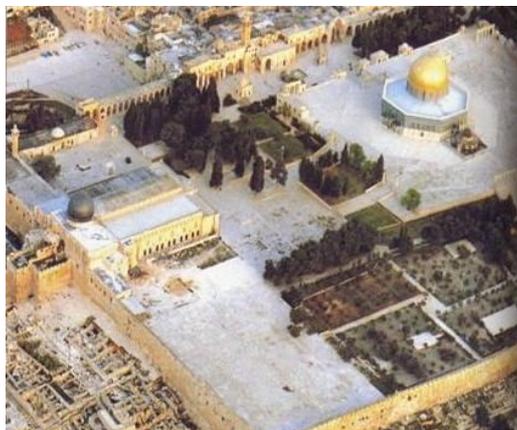
Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) advised Muslims to visit three mosques which have particular significance. These are the Sacred Mosque in Makkah; his (the Prophet's) Mosque in Madinah; and Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem.



The sacred Mosque in Makkah



The Prophet's Mosque - Madinah



The Al-Aqsa Mosque- Jerusalem

Visiting the Mosque:

Most mosques welcome visitors when it is not prayer time and larger Islamic centres may have facilities to accommodate school groups, with guides to explain the mosque layout etc.

Visiting the Dublin Mosque:

If your school, college or group wishes to visit the Dublin Mosque on the South Circular Road, then you are most welcome. There is no charge for visiting the Mosque. Usually a visit takes around 45 minutes and includes a description of the Mosque as well as a brief introduction of Islam followed by questions and answers.

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The Dublin Mosque



The Whole earth is a Mosque