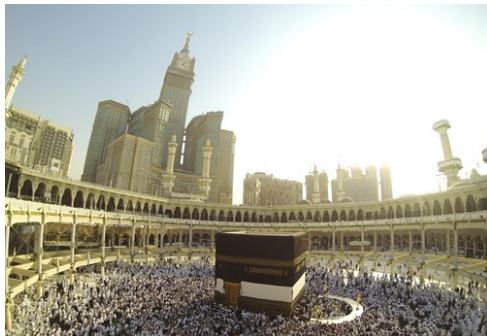


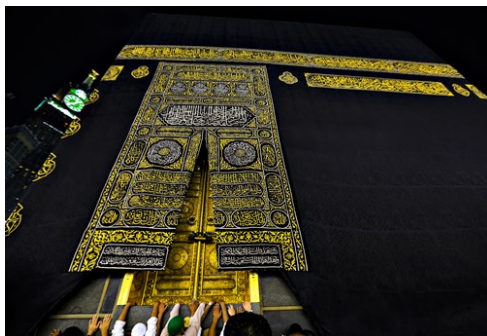
Mecca

Photo: Orhan Durgut/Shutterstock.com



ZouZou/Shutterstock.com

For more than one billion of the world's population, Mecca is the holiest of sites, being the birthplace of Prophet Muhammad and the city of the revelation. Due to its religious importance, millions of pilgrims come here year after year from every corner of the planet, making it one of the most culturally and ethnically diverse cities in the Muslim world, a true melting pot of peoples and cultures.

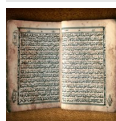


Samet Guler/Shutterstock.com



Sapsiwai/Shutterstock.com

Featured



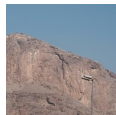
Mecca Museum

The Mecca Museum hosts a vast collection of artefacts and relics from the ce...



Mina

Mina, also called Tent City, lies on the place where Prophet Abraham stoned ...



Jabal Thawr

This mountain contains the cave where Prophet Muhammad and his companion Abu...

Top 5



Al-Haram Mosque

Al-Masjid Al-Haram, literally 'the Forbidden Mosque', is one of the three mo...



The Kaaba

The Kaaba is located inside Al-Haram Mosque and is the holiest site in Islam...



Jabal Al-Nour

Literally 'The Mountain of Light', it is the place where Prophet Muhammad re...



Abraj Al-Bait

This enormous hotel complex is composed of seven skyscrapers located right n...



Jabal Arafat

Mount Arafat is a small hill outside of Mecca and a major holy site in Islam...



THE CITY



eabudiab/Shutterstock.com

Mecca is regarded as the holiest city in Islam, and millions of Muslims flock to its mosques every year for worship and devotion. It is one of the Five Pillars of Islam to go on a pilgrimage to Mecca, Hajj, at least once in a lifetime, and it is greatly encouraged to make another one, called Umrah.

Mecca's importance is tied to the life and message of Prophet Muhammad. Because it was here that the Prophet was born, and it was also here that God sent him the first revelation of the Quran through the archangel Gabriel. Since the Prophet's time, Mecca has been at the centre of the Muslim world, for it is facing towards it that all Muslims pray every day.

In recent years, however, the city has suffered a contradictory policy (imposed by the Saudi government) of destroying historical sites, such as the birthplace of Prophet Muhammad, for fear that people would worship him instead of God and, most importantly, to make room for hotels and shopping malls. Such was the fate of the house of Abu Bakr, the loyal companion of the Prophet, replaced by the Hilton Hotel.

Mecca is a city of contradictions, but it still retains enormous historical significance, even with the threat of bulldozers ready to raze old

monuments to the ground for the sake of money and grandeur.

DO & SEE



ayazad/Shutterstock.com

The major landmarks of Mecca include several of the holiest places in the world, like the Kaaba, which contains the Black Stone, and the Cave of Hira, where Prophet Muhammad received his first revelation. To these revered places other, newer but not less impressive landmarks have been added, most notably the enormous Abraj Al-Bait complex with the Makkah Clock Royal Tower imposingly rising above it.

Al-Haram Mosque



Al-Masjid Al-Haram, literally 'the Forbidden Mosque', is one of the three most sacred mosques in Islam, along with An-Nabawi in Medina and Al-Aqsa in Jerusalem, and also the largest in the world. Every year millions of worshippers visit the mosque on their Hajj pilgrimage to perform the Salah, 'act of worship', and the Tawaf, which consists of seven circular walks around the Kaaba, the sacred building that contains the Black Stone.

Photo: HansMusa/Shutterstock.com

Address: Al-Masjid Al-Haram, Mecca

The Kaaba



The Kaaba is located inside Al-Haram Mosque and is the holiest site in Islam. It was built by Prophet Abraham and his son, Prophet Ishmael, to house the Black Stone, given to them by the Archangel Gabriel. The Black Stone was placed in the eastern corner of the Kaaba by Prophet Muhammad and it has the appearance of a fragmented black rock.

Photo: Zurijeta/Shutterstock.com
Address: Al-Masjid Al-Haram, Mecca

Jabal Al-Nour



Literally 'The Mountain of Light', it is the place where Prophet Muhammad received his first revelation and it is thus a place of worship and devotion visited by many pilgrims. On this mountain the Cave of Hira is to be found, where the Prophet spent much time in meditation and received the first verses of the Quran.

Photo: kiraziku2u/Shutterstock.com
Address: Jabal Al-Nour, Mecca

Abraj Al-Bait



This enormous hotel complex is composed of seven skyscrapers located right next to Al-Haram Mosque. The Makkah Clock Royal Tower is the third tallest building in the world with a staggering height of 581.1 metres. It contains the five-star Fairmont Hotel.

Photo: Ijam Hairi/Shutterstock.com
Address: First Ring Road, Al Hajlah, Mecca

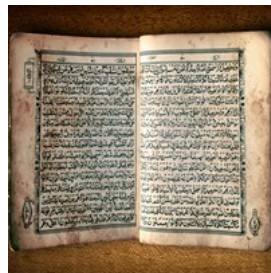
Jabal Arafat



Mount Arafat is a small hill outside of Mecca and a major holy site in Islam, as this is the place where Prophet Muhammad gave his last sermon. It is also called 'The Mountain of Mercy' because it was here that God forgave Adam and Eve after they fell from heaven.

Photo: Ranj Hameed/Shutterstock.com
Address: Jabal Arafat, Mecca

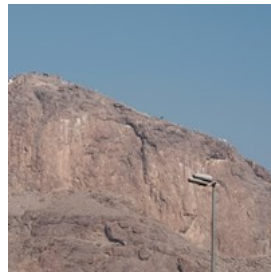
Mecca Museum



The Mecca Museum hosts a vast collection of artefacts and relics from the centuries-old Islamic history, such as various doors and pillars from the Kaaba and rare manuscript copies of the Quran.

Photo: nuttakit/Shutterstock.com
Address: Makkah Al Madinah Munawwrah Road, Mecca
Phone: +966 55 556 4413

Jabal Thawr



This mountain contains the cave where Prophet Muhammad and his companion Abu Bakr hid for three days and three nights before fleeing to Medina. As such, it is a holy site and it is visited by many pilgrims and tourists.

Photo: Abd. Halim Hadi/Shutterstock.com
Address: Jabal Thawr, Mecca

Mina



Mina, also called Tent City, lies on the place where Prophet Abraham stoned the Devil in the form of three pillars that allegorically represent

temptation. The city serves as a shelter for pilgrims and can host up to 3 million people in more than 100,000 air-conditioned tents, covering an area of approximately 20 km².

Photo: Waleed Shah/Shutterstock.com

Address: Mina, Mecca

DINING



wong yu liang/Shutterstock.com

Dining in Mecca is a diverse and stimulating experience, with a fusion of culinary traditions from all over the Muslim world and beyond. From Malaysian and Pakistani food to Chinese and even Western cuisine, it is possible to taste many different kinds of dishes in Mecca, all rigorously halal, in line with prescriptions of the Quran.

Al Dyafa Restaurant



Located just a few steps away from Al-Haram Mosque, this restaurant enjoys an incomparable vista over the Kaaba. It serves middle-eastern as well as international dishes with an extensive a la carte menu and generous buffet.

Photo: Evgheni Lachi/Shutterstock.com

Address: King Abdul Aziz Rd, Gate 9601, Abraj Al Bait Ajjad Street, Mecca

Opening hours: Daily 6am-11pm

Phone: +966 12 571 4444

Internet: www.rotana.com/rayhaanhotelandresorts/kingdomofsaudi-arabia/makkah/almarwarayhaanbyrotana/dining

More Info: Makkah Clock Royal Tower, A Fairmont Hotel

The Oasis Restaurant



The Oasis offers its guests a blend of local Arabic as well as Asian and Western cuisines in a refined and elegant interior overlooking the

holiest of places. The restaurant is open for breakfast, lunch, and dinner.

Photo: MikeDotta/Shutterstock.com

Address: Ibrahim Al Khalil, Street, Jabal Omar, Mecca

Opening hours: 24/7

Phone: +966 50 803 4442

Al Shorfa Restaurant



Al Shorfa Restaurant offers an excellent dining experience on the nice open-air terrace with an astounding panoramic view over the Kaaba. It

offers both a buffet and an a la carte menu for breakfast, lunch, and dinner.

Photo: Milanchikov Sergey/Shutterstock.com
Address: Ajyad Street, Abraj Al Bait, Mecca
Opening hours: Daily 7am-11pm
Phone: +966 12 571 4444
Internet: www.rotana.com/rayhaanhotelandresorts/kingdomofsaudiArabia/makkah/almarwarayhaanbyrotana/dining
More Info: Located at Makkah Clock Royal Tower, A Fairmont Hotel

Albaik



Albaik is a Saudi Arabian chain of fast-food restaurants specialised in fried chicken and shrimp, with several branches in the country's major cities.

It's a very popular eatery frequented by locals and tourists, as evidenced by the long queues at the entrance.

Photo: Slawomir Fajer/Shutterstock.com
Address: Ibrahim Al Khalil, Ash Shubaikah, Mecca
Opening hours: Daily 10:30am-2am
Phone: +966 800 244 2245
Internet: www.albaik.com/en
Email: info@albaik.com

CAFES



Waleed_Hammoudeh/Shutterstock.com

Mecca offers several opportunities for a relaxing and enjoyable coffee break. The choice of cafes and eateries ranges from small coffee shops to big chain cafes and lounges inside the various shopping malls. Couple that with some good pastry shops, and you have the right amount of

places to choose from to satisfy your need for sweets and good coffee.

Simit Sarayi

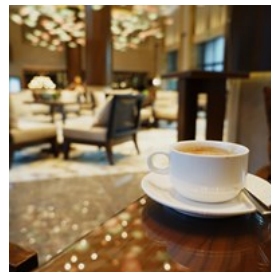


Simit Sarayi will satisfy your hunger with freshly baked Turkish pastries and quench your thirst with Turkish tea and coffee. Everything at

Simit Sarayi is made according to the genuine Turkish tradition so that you can enjoy a piece of Turkey during your stay in Mecca.

Photo: Nataliya Arzamasova/Shutterstock.com
Address: Diamond Tower, First Floor, Ajyad, Mecca
Opening hours: Daily 8:30am-12am
Phone: +966 12 571 9150
Internet: www.simitsarayi.com/en
More Info: ZamZam Tower

Lobby Lounge



This tea room and lounge is perfect for a chilled out afternoon away from the scorching sun of Mecca. The menu is varied and offers a wide selection of foods, from French and Arabic pastries to Asian and international dishes.

Photo: August_0802/Shutterstock.com
Address: Abraj Al Bait Complex King Abdel Aziz Endowment Saudi Arabia
Opening hours: Daily 12:30pm-3pm, 3:30-11:30pm
Phone: +966 12 571 5555
Internet: restaurants.accor.com/gb/restaurant-6036_R003-lobby-lounge-makkah.shtml
More Info: Located at the Makkah Clock Royal Tower, A Fairmont Hotel

Barncafe



Barncafe is a local coffee shop chain that serves a variety of premium quality coffee, from Italian cappuccino to all kinds of French and Turkish coffee. Couple that with tasty home baked goods and you have all the right ingredients for a perfect breakfast.

Photo: Kite_rin/Shutterstock.com
Address: Ar Rashdiyyah, Mecca
Opening hours: Daily 7am-12am

Papparoti Cafe



A nice and cosy cafe famous for its delicious buns, located inside Makkah Mall. If you feel in need of a cold drink and a little snack, make sure to pay a visit and try one of their signature buns, you won't be disappointed.

Photo: ilolab/Shutterstock.com
Address: Makkah Mall, King Abdullah Rd, Al Jamiah, Mecca
Opening hours: Sat-Thu 9:30am-12am, Fri 3pm-12am
Phone: +966 50 081 9932
Internet: papparoti.ae

Chocochino



If you are a chocolate lover, you should definitely stop by Chocochino and taste chocolate in all of its forms. From crepes and brownies to hot chocolate and coffee, this cosy little cafe will make your day.

Photo: Germanova Antonina/Shutterstock.com
Address: 3034 King Abdullah Rd, Al Jamiah, Mecca

Opening hours: Sat-Thu 9am-12am, Fri 4pm-12am
More Info: Makkah Mall

BARS & NIGHTLIFE



Sophie James/Shutterstock.com

Saudi law forbids the sale and consumption of all sorts of intoxicants, including alcohol. This means that there are no pubs, nightclubs, nor bars of any kind in Mecca. Evenings in the holy city are spent either in one of the many hotel restaurants and lounges or in one of the big shopping malls, where visitors can indulge themselves and get some respite from the outside heat.

SHOPPING



H1N1/Shutterstock.com

The streets of Mecca are full of small shops and bazaars that sell all sorts of items, from food and clothes to prayer mats and copies of the Quran. These stalls can be very interesting from a cultural perspective and also cheap if you are good at bargaining. If the loud and crowded

street bazaars are not your thing, however, Mecca has a lot of air-conditioned malls where you can find all the goods you're looking for, as well as restaurants and cafes to rest and relax between the shopping sessions.

Makkah Mall



Makkah Mall is the biggest and most important shopping centre in Mecca. It hosts countless shops with both local and international brands as well as cafes and restaurants. It also has a huge play park for kids.

Photo: sirtravelalot/Shutterstock.com

Address: Makkah Mall, King Abdullah Road, Al Aziziyah, Mecca

Phone: +966 2 528 2211

Internet:

www.arabiancentres.com/mall/index/en/15/makkah-mall

Email: makkahmall@arabiancentres.com

Bedoon Essm



This boutique is specialised in women's clothing, bags and accessories. They sell traditional Islamic dresses as well as

different brands of bags and wallets. The chain has several stores spread throughout Mecca and in the major shopping centres.

Photo: Naufal MQ/Shutterstock.com

Address: Jabal Al Kaabah, At Taysir, Jabal Omar, Mecca

Phone: +966 55 496 9740

Internet: www.bedooneessm.com

Email: cs@bedooneessm.com

Dawah Corner



Dawah Corner is a book store that specialises in Islamic books and publications. Here you can find copies of the Quran translated and commented on in different languages, as well as novels, essays and prayer books.

Photo: Don Pablo/Shutterstock.com

Address: Hilton Tower, Makkah Commercial Center, Al Hajlah, Mecca

Phone: +966 12 531 1895

Internet: www.dakwahbookstore.com.my

Email: dcb_makkah@yahoo.com

Al Haramain Perfume Shop



Established in 1970, Al Haramain has now become one of the leading companies in the production and retailing of perfume in the Middle East and beyond. In their Mecca showroom you can find all their premium perfumes, scents and oils.

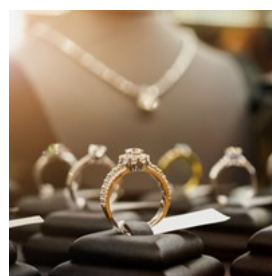
Photo: FabrikaSimf/Shutterstock.com

Address: Makkah Millenium Hotel & Towers, Mecca

Phone: +966 12 536 0753

Internet: www.alharamainperfumes.com

Malabar Gold & Diamonds



If you feel in the mood for a spending spree, Malabar Gold & Diamonds will get you covered with expensive jewellery, gold and diamonds. They sell a variety of luxury items ranging from rings, pendants and bracelets to loose diamonds and watches.

Photo: Kwangmoozaa/Shutterstock.com

Address: Jabal Omar Mall, Mecca

Opening hours: Daily 10.00-22.00. Fri 15.00-24.00

Phone: +966 12 577 9172

Internet: www.malabargoldanddiamonds.com

Email: mgdmecca@malabargroup.com

Ontime



Ontime deals in designer watches, offering a great selection of products from the most popular brands, for both men and women. With over 110

stores, it's one of the biggest retailers in the Arabian peninsula and a trend setter for stylish watches.

Photo: Addoro/Shutterstock.com

Address: Azizia Street, Mecca

Opening hours: Daily 9.30-23.30. Fri 4.30-23.30

Phone: +966 12 561 2855

Internet: www.ontime.com

TOURIST INFORMATION



Orhan Durgut/Shutterstock.com

Can I visit Mecca as a Tourist?



Mecca is the holiest city in Islam and Saudi law strictly forbids non-Muslims from entering it. Documents will be checked upon

entry at dedicated checkpoints, and non-Muslims will be redirected to a motorway that bypasses the city. Pilgrims must show proof of being Muslim (a certificate is needed for those converted to Islam) and women must be accompanied by a Mahram (male guardian). The Saudi Arabian government issues special Hajj or Umrah visas to simplify the process but the sheer amount of paperwork makes many pilgrims rely on specialised travel agencies to handle that.

Photo: Victor Z/Shutterstock.com

Cultural Norms



When strolling and exploring the city, please make sure you wear the appropriate attire. Women should be covered from neck to

ankle and in certain areas scarves are used to cover the face and head. Shorts and tank tops should not be worn outside of your accommodation by women. For men, loose clothing is recommended and shorts are prohibited.

When visiting, please make sure you respect and abide by the laws and culture of the country.

Photo: ClkerFreeVectorImages

Passport / Visa



Saudi Arabia introduced a new eVisa system in October 2019, dramatically simplifying visa applications for citizens of multiple world

countries, including the USA, Canada, China, Japan, Australia, and much of Europe. The new multiple-entry visa will be processed within record time (as quickly as 30 minutes), issued for one year, and will allow visitors to stay in the country for up to 90 days during its validity period. This marks a watershed moment in the country's history, as Saudi Arabia has historically been off limits to non-Muslim tourists, with visas notoriously difficult to secure.

Citizens of countries not covered by the eVisa program will still need to turn to their nearest consulate to obtain a visa.

Special visas for Hajj or Umrah are issued by the government for those who want to perform a pilgrimage. To apply for a Hajj or Umrah visa, visit the nearest Saudi consulate or embassy or contact an approved Hajj travel agent, who will get the the necessary papers for you.

Photo: TukTuk Design/Shutterstock.com

Internet: <https://visa.visitsaudi.com>

Best Time to Visit



The weather in Mecca is hot and dry year round, but there is some variation between summer and winter. Most tourists and pilgrims visit

Mecca during the somewhat cooler winter months and avoid the city during the hottest

period (June-August). Mecca sees almost no precipitation and winds are usually very calm which, coupled with the extreme temperatures, can make the city scorching hot, so be sure to stay hydrated and avoid too much sun exposure.

As the holiest city in Islam, Mecca is always crowded with pilgrims and unfortunately tragic incidents like stampedes are not uncommon. Thus, visitors are advised to be careful and always pay attention to their surroundings.

Photo: VectorA/Shutterstock.com

King Abdulaziz International Airport (JED)



King Abdulaziz International Airport (JED) is located in Jeddah and is the largest airport in Saudi Arabia. Often called 'the gateway to

Mecca', it has a dedicated terminal for Hajj, which is active during Hajj season (during the last month of the Islamic calendar,) to help accommodate the vast number of pilgrims. Buses and taxis are available at the airport and offer an easy mode of transport to Mecca.

Photo: Juan Garces

Address: King Abdulaziz International Airport, Jeddah

Phone: +966 92 001 1233

Internet: www.jed-airport.com

Email: info@jed-airport.com

Public Transport



The best way to get to Mecca is by car or bus from Jeddah. Saptco is the company that runs intercity transportation in Saudi Arabia and they provide regular bus lines from Jeddah to Mecca:

www.saptco.com.sa

There is also a metro line in Mecca (planned to be expanded to four), but it only operates during Hajj season to provide safe transportation for pilgrims and reduce traffic congestion.

Photo: Pierre-Luc Auclair

Taxi



Taxis are readily available at the Jeddah Airport and in Mecca, but for moving around in the city, especially during Hajj season, it is more

advisable to just walk, as traffic is congested. A taxi ride from Jeddah to Mecca takes one hour and can cost between 150 and 200 SAR, depending on the taxi company and local traffic.

Umrah Taxi:

Photo: ArrivalGuides

Address: Hira Street, Jeddah

Phone: +966 54 220 4135

Email: umrahtaxibookings@gmail.com

Pharmacy



Nahdi Pharmacy Makkah Mall:

Photo: Gemma Garner

Address: Makkah Mall, King Abdullah Road, Al Aziziyah, Mecca

Phone: +966 12 597 0550

Internet: www.nahdi.sa/en

Email: customercare@nahdi.sa

Post Office

Central Post Office
Mecca:



Photo: Andy Fuchs

Address: Al Jerooshi Mall, 3rd Ring Road, Ar Rusayfah, Mecca

Opening hours: Daily 07.30-21.00. Closed on Friday

Phone: +966 12 572 0777

Internet: www.sp.com.sa/en

Telephone



Country code: +966 Area code: 2

Photo: Jardson Almeida

Electricity

125/215 Volts AC,
50/60Hz



Photo: Stirling Tschan

Population

2 million (2020 estimate)

Currency

1 riyal (SAR) = 100 halalas

Opening hours

The typical working week starts on Sunday and ends on Thursday, but most shops and businesses also open on Saturday. On Friday, they do not open until the afternoon prayer is finished, which is around 4pm.

Newspapers

Arab News
Saudi Gazette
Aseer News

Emergency numbers

Police: 999
Fire Brigade: 998
Ambulance: 997

Tourist information

Tourism Contact Center
+966 11 261 4750
www.sauditourism.sa/en

Saudi Commission for Tourism and National Heritage (SCTH)
www.scth.gov.sa/en