



# Ramadan



A presentation to help non Muslims understand this month in the Islamic calendar

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- What is Ramadan?
- Why is Ramadan so significant?
- Practices during Ramadan
- Eid Al-Fitr: Marking the end of Ramadan
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## What is Ramadan?

- Ramadan (*Ramazān (Persian); Ramzān (Urdu)*) is the ninth month of the lunar based Islamic (Hijri) calendar.
- Ramadan is derived from an Arabic word meaning intense heat, scorched ground, shortness of food and drink.
- Many Muslims in Australia welcome Ramadan as a period of prayer, fasting, philanthropy and self-accountability.

## What is Ramadan?

- There may be a variation of the date for Islamic holidays, which begin at sundown the day before the date specified for the holiday.
- The lunar calendar is 11-12 days shorter than the Gregorian / solar calendar, therefore the dates of Islamic holidays will vary and be 11-12 days earlier from year to year.
- There may also be a difference in dates around the world depending on when the New Moon is first seen.

## Why is Ramadan so significant?

- Ramadan is considered to be the most holy and blessed month in Islam.
- Ramadan commemorates when the first verses of the Koran (Qu'ran) were revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (*Mohammad; Muhammed*). This occurred on Laylat Al-Qadr, one of the last 10 nights of the month.
- Fasting during Ramadan is one of the Five Pillars (fundamental religious duties) of Islam.



## Practices during Ramadan

- Many Muslims in Australia fast during the daylight hours in the month of Ramadan.
- It is a time of self-examination, increased charity and increased religious devotion.
- It is common to have a pre-fast meal (*suhoor*) before sunrise and an evening meal (*iftar*) after sunset during Ramadan.



## Practices during Ramadan

- Some groups of people (including children, the mentally and physically ill, the elderly, expectant or breast feeding mothers) are exempt from fasting (for health reasons).
- Many who are exempt from fasting will donate food to the poor instead.
- Travellers are expected to make up the days they miss.
- Charity is very important in Islam, and Ramadan is a time for increased philanthropy.
- Muslims are also encouraged to read the Qur'an often during Ramadan. Some Muslims recite the entire Qur'an by the end of Ramadan through special prayers known as *Tarawih*, which are held in the mosques every night of the month, during which a section of the Qur'an is recited.

## Practices during Ramadan

- Fasting is an important part of Ramadan which provides the following benefits to Muslims:
  - Helps Muslims draw closer to God
  - Dual physical and spiritual aspect of withdrawing from food and drink and withdrawing from impure thoughts and actions
  - A fasting person experiences some of the hardships of the poor and hungry and therefore encourages charitable activities to the less fortunate



## Eid Al-Fitr: Marking the end of Ramadan

- Ramadan ends when the first crescent of the new moon is sighted again, marking the new lunar month's start.
- Eid-al-Fitr is the Islamic holiday that marks the end of Ramadan.
- As the concept of fasting during Ramadan could be likened to the Jewish practice of fasting on Yom Kippur, Eid al-Fitr could be likened to the celebrations of Christmas in Christianity: Enjoying festive meals, praising God, wearing their best (often new) clothes, visiting relatives and friends, and gift giving.
- Food or money to feed a poor person is given.

## Working with Muslim colleagues and students

- Be considerate that this is the most special month in a Muslim's calendar.
- It is common for Muslims to take the last week of Ramadan as a holiday.
- Eid-Al-Fitr is usually taken as a holiday.
- Many Islamic businesses and organisations may amend opening hours to suit prayer times during Ramadan.
- Expect some congestion around mosques during prayer times, such as in the evenings.

## Working with Muslim colleagues and students

- Avoid the following for Muslim colleagues and students during Ramadan:
  - Meetings or classes which include snacks or lunch
  - Meetings or classes extending past 5pm
  - Department or class social events
- To cross cultural and faith boundaries:
  - Share in the Iftar (evening meal) if invited
  - Greet colleagues with “Ramadan Mubarak” (Blessed Ramadan)

## Travelling or working in Muslim countries

- Be aware many Islamic businesses and organisations may amend opening hours to suit prayer times during Ramadan.
- Expect congestion around mosques during prayer times, such as in the evenings.
- Expect flights to be fully booked to and from the Gulf area during the second half of Ramadan (with people making their pilgrimage to Mecca).
- Expect congestion getting into and out of Muslim countries from about a week prior to Ramadan until 3 days after Eid-Al-Fitr.

## Summary

- Many Muslims in Australia welcome Ramadan as a period of prayer, fasting, philanthropy and self-accountability.
- Ramadan is considered to be the most holy and blessed month in Islam.
- Many Muslims in Australia fast during the daylight hours in the month of Ramadan.
- Eid-al-Fitr is the Islamic holiday that marks the end of Ramadan.
- Be considerate that this is the most special month in a Muslim's calendar.



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This presentation has been made in consultation with the Swinburne Islamic Society, and the Muslim Chaplain at Swinburne

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