



Ramadan and Fasting

The holy month of Ramadan is the 4th of the 5th pillars of Islam and the ninth month of the Islamic calendar. It serves as a declaration of faith involving daily prayers, the purification of wealth, fasting, and a Hajj, which is a Pilgrimage to Makkah for those who are physically and financially able.

It is the Month in which the Qur'an (the holy book of Islam) was revealed; the special month of fasting, repentance, increased prayer and increased charity; and ends with the festival of Eid-al-Fitr, which is a day of celebration and gratitude.

Fasting during Ramadan begins at the break of dawn and ends at sunset, and is obligatory to all adult Muslims except those who are exempt. Fasting aids in the increase of iman (faith) and ihsan (sincerity and righteousness) and removal of riyya' (showing off), the purification of the heart/soul, helps to improve one's character, and trains the person to do praiseworthy acts e.g. charity, kindness, generosity, patience and forgiveness.



The primary objective of fasting is to attain taqwa - "God consciousness", and self-discipline. The spiritual objectives and benefits of fasting are in helping Muslims draw closer to God through increased recitation and reflection of the Qur'an and additional prayers and worship.



Iftar

Iftar (Arabic: إفطار), refers to the evening meal when Muslims break their fast during Ramadan. Iftar is one of the religious observances of Ramadan and is often done as a community, with people gathering to break their fast together. Iftar is done right after Maghrib (sunset) time. Traditionally, a date is the first thing to be consumed when the fast is broken.

If invited to share Iftar, try to make it... it will be fun!

Guidelines inside the office

- Be understanding that it is the most special month in a Muslim's calendar.
- Eating, drinking, chewing gum, and smoking are prohibited in public during fasting hours.
- Dress conservatively and refrain from using abusive language.
- Try to avoid the following for your Muslim colleagues:
 - meetings which include lunch
 - meetings extending after 1.30 pm
 - department parties (or social events) during Ramadan
- Greeting colleagues saying, "Ramadan Mubarak" (Blessed Ramadan) is a very nice way to cross into a new culture.

Guidelines outside of the office

- Playing live music in public is banned during fasting hours.
- Eating, drinking, chewing gum, and smoking are prohibited in public during fasting hours.
- Dress conservatively and refrain from using abusive language.
- Holiday jams to Muslim countries begin a week before the end of Ramadan till three days after Eid.
- Congestion occurs on flights to and from the Gulf area during the second half of Ramadan.
- Traffic jams are common before iftar and are sometimes grid-locked.
- Working hours in some companies end earlier during Ramadan so please plan accordingly.

Ramadan rules and regulations for non-Muslims

By Shaktimaan on Thu, 19/07/2012 - 4:29pm

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During the 30 days of Ramadan, fasting Muslims around the world will observe strict rules, including abstaining from eating, drinking, smoking and engaging in sexual relations between sunrise and sunset.

Non-Muslims, too, will be expected to respect the local culture in many Islamic countries, and should be aware of certain rules and regulations...

There are strict fines in some Islamic countries, as well as possible jail time, for eating, drinking, smoking and even chewing gum in public – including in their own cars - during daylight hours.

In the UAE, for instance, fines can range from AED2,000-2,500 and/or a one- or two-month jail sentence. Getting let off with a warning is a possibility, but not guaranteed.

In Egypt, citizens and foreigners can be arrested for a misdemeanor offence if caught, while in Indonesia penalties can include flogging.

While non-Muslims are not expected to fast, showing courtesy and consideration for those who are fasting is expected.

During the day, **non-Muslims can eat in designated areas**, usually behind screens. Some hotels, shopping mall food courts and restaurants will remain open – but discreetly – so it is best to plan ahead by calling them to find out.

Most outlets will deliver food during the day as well.

Similarly, most offices have designated areas where you can eat or drink. It is considered common courtesy not to do so in front of your fasting colleagues.

Learning a few Ramadan greetings can show your respect for the Islamic culture. In Arabic, it is customary to **say "Ramadan Kareem" or "Ramadan Mubarak"**, which basically translates into "May you have a generous/ blessed Ramadan".

Do accept Iftar invitations from friends or colleagues, as this will provide you with a way of learning more about the customs and traditions of Ramadan.

Ramadan is a month for peace and piety, so **abstain from swearing and using offensive language or gestures in public, as this is considered disrespectful.**

Ramadan is also a time for giving and charity, so **do your bit by donating to your favourite charity** or volunteering.

Because fasting also includes abstaining from sexual contact, **any public displays of affection are considered disrespectful, too.**

Modest dress is advisable, so do cover up.

Women should wear loose, long-sleeved tops and knee-length skirts or trousers, while men should wear long trousers.

Work hours for most banks, offices and government organizations will **be reduced by at least two hours, so make sure you find out the new timings.**

Public transport schedules (such as for the Dubai Metro) and paid parking hours will also change during the month.

Live music is banned in public places during Ramadan but recorded music may be allowed.

While bars remain open at night, most night clubs are closed. Likewise, **playing loud music either in cars or in private residences is considered impolite and should be avoided.**

Some Muslims are exempt from fasting during Ramadan, so do not be surprised to see them eating as usual. These include the sick, elderly, pre-pubescent children, nursing mothers, pregnant or menstruating women and travelers.

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