

## Medina

Medina, al-Madīnah l-Munawwarah, is a city in the Hejaz region of western Saudi Arabia, and serves as the capital of the Al Madinah Province. It is the second holiest city in Islam, and the burial place of the Islamic Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), and it is historically significant for being his home after the Hijrah. Before the advent of Islam, the city was known as Yathrib, but was personally renamed by Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him).



Medina is home to the three oldest mosques in Islam, namely; Al-Masjid al-Nabawi (The Prophet's Mosque), Quba Mosque (the first mosque in Islam's history), and Masjid al-Qiblatain (the mosque where the qibla was switched to Mecca).

Because of the Saudi government's religious policy and concern that historic sites could become the focus for idolatry, much of Medina's Islamic physical heritage has been destroyed since the beginning of Saudi rule.

The Islamic calendar is based on the emigration of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and his followers to the city of Medina, which marks the start of the Hijri year in 622 CE, called Hijra.

Similarly to Mecca, entrance to Medina is restricted to Muslims only; non-Muslims are neither permitted to enter nor travel through the city.

## Religious significance in Islam

Medina's importance as a religious site derives from the presence of Al-Masjid al-Nabawi or The Mosque of The Prophet. The tomb of Prophet Muhammad later became part of the mosque

when it was expanded by the Umayyad Caliph Al-Walid I. Mount Uhud is a mountain north of Medina which was the site of the second battle between Muslim and Meccan forces.

The first mosque built during Muhammad's time is also located in Medina and is known as Masjid Quba (the Quba Mosque). It was destroyed by lightning, probably about 850 CE, and the graves were almost forgotten. In 892, the place was cleared up, the tombs located and a fine mosque built, which was destroyed by fire in 1257 CE and almost immediately rebuilt. It was restored by Qaitbay, the Egyptian ruler, in 1487.

Masjid al-Qiblatain is another mosque also historically important to Muslims. It is where the prophet changed the direction of prayer (qibla) from Jerusalem to Mecca according to Sunni hadiths.

Like Mecca, the city of Medina only permits Muslims to enter, although the haram (area closed to non-Muslims) of Medina is much smaller than that of Mecca, with the result that many facilities on the outskirts of Medina are open to non-Muslims, whereas in Mecca the area closed to non-Muslims extends well beyond the limits of the built-up area. Both cities' numerous mosques are the destination for large numbers of Muslims on their Hajj (annual pilgrimage). Hundreds of thousands of Muslims come to Medina annually to visit the Tomb of Prophet and to worship at mosques in a unified celebration.[citation needed] Al-Baqi' is a significant cemetery in Medina where several family members of Muhammad, caliphs and scholars are buried, as well as Shias imams.

Islamic scriptures emphasize the sacredness of Medina. Medina is mentioned several times as being sacred in the Qur'an, for example ayah; 9:101, 9:129, 59:9, and ayah 63:7. Medinan suras are typically longer than their Meccan counterparts. There is also a book within the hadith of Bukhari titled 'virtues of Medina'.

Sahih Bukhari says;

“ Narrated Anas: The Prophet said, "Medina is a sanctuary from that place to that. Its trees should not be cut and no heresy should be innovated nor any sin should be committed in it, and whoever innovates in it an heresy or commits sins (bad deeds), then he will incur the curse of Allah, the angels, and all the people.”

## **Al-Masjid al-Nabawi**

Al-Masjid al-Nabawi, often called the Prophet's Mosque, is a mosque situated in the city of Medina. As the final resting place of the Prophet Muhammad, it is considered the second holiest site in Islam by Muslims (the first being the Masjid al-Haram in Mecca) and is one of the largest mosques in the world. The mosque is under the control of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques.



One of the most notable features of the site is the Green Dome over the center of the mosque, where the tomb of Muhammad is located. It is not exactly known when the green dome was constructed but manuscripts dating to the early 12th century describe the dome. It is known as the Dome of the Prophet or the Green Dome. Subsequent Islamic rulers greatly expanded and decorated it. Early Muslim leaders Abu Bakr and Umar are buried in an adjacent area in the mosque.

The site was originally Muhammad's house; he settled there after his Hijra (emigration) to Medina, later building a mosque on the grounds. He himself shared in the heavy work of construction. The original mosque was an open-air building. The basic plan of the building has been adopted in the building of other mosques throughout the world.

The mosque also served as a community center, a court, and a religious school. There was a raised platform for the people who taught the Qur'an. In 1909, it became the first place in the Arabian Peninsula to be provided with electrical lights.

## **Muhammad's arrival**

In 622, Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and the Muhajirun left Mecca and arrived at Yathrib, an event that would transform the religious and political landscape completely; the longstanding enmity between the Aus and Khazraj tribes was dampened as many of the two

tribes embraced Islam. Muhammad, linked to the Khazraj through his great grandmother, was soon made the chief and united the Muslim converts of Yathrib under the name Ansar ("the Patrons" or "the Helpers"). After Muhammad's arrival, the city gradually came to be known as Medina (literally "city" in Arabic). Some consider this name as a derivative from the Aramaic word Medinta, which the Jewish inhabitants would have used for the city.



### **Mount Uhud**

Mount Uhud is a mountain in north of Medina. It is 1,077 m (3,533 ft) high. This is a section of Mount Uhud, in front of which the second battle in Islam (the Battle of Uhud) took place in 3 AH. Of this mountain the Prophet (s.a.w.) declared, "This mountain loves us and we love it." [Muslim].

### **Masjid Quba**

Quba is the place on the outskirts of Madinah where the Prophet (s.a.w.), accompanied by Abu Bakr (r.a.) arrived and first stayed after emigrating from Makkah. They arrived on Monday 12th Rab'i al-Awwal, fourteen years after Prophethood and this date marks the beginning of the Islamic calendar (Hijra). (16th July 622 CE). A masjid was established here by the Prophet (s.a.w.), the first to be built in Islam.



The virtue of Masjid Qubas is mentioned in the following Quranic verse in Surah Taubah:

"...certainly a masjid founded on piety from the very first day is more deserving that you should stand in it..." [9:108]

The Prophet (s.a.w) said: "He who purifies himself at his home and comes to Masjid Quba and offers two rakats therein, will be rewarded the reward of an Umrah (lesser pilgrimage)."

[Sunan ibn Majah]

## **Masjid Qiblatain**

This is Masjid Qiblatain (Mosque of the Two Qiblas). It is historically important to Muslims as this is where in Rajab 2 AH the revelation of the Holy Quran came to change the direction of the qibla from Bait-al-Maqdis in Jerusalem to the Ka'bah in Makkah.



During his time in Makkah, the Prophet Muhammed (s.a.w.) used to pray towards Bait-al-Maqdis, with the Ka'bah in front of him. When he migrated to Madinah, he prayed towards Jerusalem for 16 months, but he hoped it would be changed to the Ka'bah.

During Dhuhr prayer or it was said that it was Asr, the Prophet (s.a.w.) had led his Companions in praying two rak'ahs, when he was commanded to face towards the Ka'bah by the following revelation in the Holy Quran in Surah al-Baqarah:

"Verily, We have seen the turning of your (Muhammed's) face towards the heaven. Surely, We shall turn you to a Qiblah (prayer direction) that shall please you, so turn your face in the direction of Al-Masjid Al-Haram (at Makkah). And wheresoever you people are, turn your faces (in prayer) in that direction." [2:144 ]

The Prophet (s.a.w.) turned around towards the Ka'bah and the Sahabah copied out of obedience. Thus the Ka'bah became the new qibla of the Muslims for all time to come.

Masjid Qiblatain used to uniquely contains two mehrabs, one in the direction of Bait-al-Maqdis and the other towards Makkah. However, the old mehrab has now been covered.

