



THE HOLY MONTH OF RAMADAN

In 2014, the religious observance of Ramadan begins on the evening of 18 June 15 and ends with the celebration of Eid al-Fitr on 17 July 15 marking the end of the holiest period in the Islamic lunar calendar, a time of fasting, prayer, and spiritual reflection. For Muslims, Ramadan is the most important holy day of the year. With that in mind, here are Facts about Ramadan and Eid al-Fitr:

By refraining from eating or drinking during the day, Muslims have more time to put in the effort to follow the teachings of Islam, pray, study the Qur'an, and practice a deep, personal worship of Allah, as well as learn self-control and sacrifice.

Muslims fast during the daylight hours from dawn to sunset. Once the sun goes down, family, friends, or neighbors gather to share Iftar, the fast-breaking meal. Ramadan continues for 29 or 30 days, and ends with the celebration of Eid al-Fitr.

Ramadan is considered a period of reflection and spiritual growth and cleansing. During this time, Muslims pray, study the Qur'an, and concentrate on their faith.

According to Islamic belief, it was during the month of Ramadan that Allah revealed the Qur'an to the prophet, Muhammad. Ramadan is considered one of the five pillars of Islam, and has been practiced for more than one thousand years.

Also known as the Festival of Breaking the Fast, Eid al-Fitr marks the end of Ramadan with a celebration. Traditionally, people put on new clothes, donate to the poor, visit relatives, and join in feasts. In many Muslim households, children receive gifts as well.

Greeting Cards have created many traditional and modern interpretations of Islamic designs for Ramadan cards and Eid al-Fitr cards with friends, family, neighbors, business contacts, and everyone else you want to wish, "Ramadan."

Points to consider for non-Muslims during Ramadan:

- Know who the Muslims are around you.
- Never make any critical remarks about any religious practice, it is considered extremely offensive.
- Public *drunkenness*, *foul language* and *obscene gestures* are extremely offensive to the local population and will not be tolerated.
- Non-Muslims are not expected to fast during Ramadan. However, they are required to refrain from consuming items in public places during fasting hours, from sunrise to sunset, as a mark of respect. Eating, drinking, or smoking in public during the day is considered a civil offense by local law. A violation by a Non-Muslim may result in a fine

or confinement. Once you arrive on the NSA installation you can drink, eat or smoke in designated areas.

- If a non-Muslim receives an invitation to share an Iftar with a Muslim, accept it with joy and honor! Be on time, if not a few minutes early.
- Most restaurants (including fast food shops) will be closed during the day except at many hotels which cater to foreigners and visitors. All restaurants and establishments that normally serve alcohol will suspend this practice during Ramadan, even after sunset.
- Expect to see shortened work hours by government and local businesses.
- Take extra precaution when driving close to Iftar time. People speed to be on time for Iftar with their family and friends.
- Modest attire is recommended (long sleeves and pants for males and females).

Remember that Arabs are good hosts, so they may offer you refreshments even though they cannot partake. Such offers should be courteously declined.