Al Aqsa Mosque

Within the walls of the Old City of Jerusalem, on the south side of the Haram al- Sharif or “Noble Sanctuary”, is the third holiest site in Islam (after Mecca and Medina), the Al Aqsa Mosque. The Al Aqsa Mosque was built on the site of the Prophet Muhammad’s ‘Night Journey,’ a physical and spiritual journey in which he travelled from Mecca to Jerusalem and later ascended to heaven and returned throughout the course of one night. In the first part of his journey, known as the Isra, Prophet Muhammad was carried on the back of his horse Buraq to a remote mosque, believed to be the spot where the Al Aqsa Mosque now stands. Built to commemorate this miraculous journey, Al Aqsa Mosque literally translates to ‘the farthest Mosque.’ First built in 705CE, Al Aqsa Mosque is one of the oldest in the world. The original construction was carried out by Umayyad caliph Al Walid. The Mosque was later damaged and then rebuilt following two earthquakes in 749 and 1033. The later structure is what is seen today. Around the time of this later reconstruction its lead-covered dome was added. Also during this time period, parts of the central nave and the dome were decorated with mosaic like the Umayyad mosaics that can be found in the neighboring Dome of the Rock. In 1099 the entire Haram al-Sharif compound was taken over by the Crusaders who believed it to be the location of the Biblical First Temple of King Solomon or Temple Mount, calling it Templum Salomonis and themselves, eventually, the Knights Templar. The area became their headquarters, with Al Aqsa Mosque first converted into a church and then a palace. During that time period, the Crusaders added vaulted western and eastern annexes to the structure, the former serving as the women’s Mosque today and the later as the Islamic Museum. In 1187, the Crusaders were driven out by Ayyubid Sultan Saladin and Al Aqsa Mosque was rededicated as a mosque. Today it is under the administration of the Islamic Waqf and is the largest mosque in Jerusalem, with room for over 4,000 worshippers inside and hundreds of thousands more on the grounds of the Haram al-Sharif. Upon entering the Haram al-Sharif, Al Aqsa Mosque with its silver-capped dome sits in the center of the compound’s southern wall. The main entrance to Al Aqsa Mosque lies on the northern side of the building. The façade is constructed as a large colonnade with seven arches with its taller central arch leading to the Mosque’s main passageway. Inside the vast prayer hall, are seven rows of columns adorned with Islamic and Byzantine designs. The hall is lit by chandeliers and the floor is covered with carpet, there are no chairs. The southern wall is the only remaining remnant of the original 8th century Mosque and houses the mihrab, or prayer niche, which shows the direction of Mecca. One of the most striking features, is the beautifully ornate minbar or pulpit. It is a reconstruction of the 12th century minbar that was commissioned by Sultan Saladin at the rededication of the Mosque and sat within the prayer hall until 1969, when it was nearly destroyed by an Australian tourist who set fire to the Mosque. The remains of the original minbar are now housed in the nearby Islamic Museum. Saladin’s minbar was made in the 12th century by medieval artisans in Syria of carved pine wood inlaid with mother-of-pearl, ivory, and ebony, featuring intricate geometric patterns and Arabic calligraphy. There were no nails or glue used in the construction, it was held together using an interlocking technique and wooden pins. In order to carry out the reconstruction, carpenters from across the Muslim world painstakingly recreated each piece, which was finally finished in 2007.

Site Religion & Type

- Muslim Site
  - Mosque

Target Group

- Free Independent Travelers (FITs)
  - Families
    - Foreign Families
    - Local Families
- general interest
- Organized Groups
  - Muslim Groups
  - Secular Groups
    - Leisure
    - Fact Finding
    - Other Secular Groups
    - Youth and Students

Telephone

0505600415

Mobile

Address

Old City of Jerusalem
Jerusalem
PS-JEM

00972Na

Fax

00972Na

Palestinian Territories

31.775171,35.229269
View in Google Maps

Best time of day to visit

No difference

Best Time of Year to Visit

Year round

Estimated time of visit

1-2 hours

Weather Consideration

Avoid on
rainy
, bad weather days

Dress Code

Head Cover
, Modest Clothes

Entry Limitation

Dress code required

Summer Times

Sunday: 7:00-11:00
1330-1430
Monday: 7:00-11:00
1330-1430
Tuesday: 7:00-11:00
1330- 1430
Wednesday: 7:00-
11:00 1330-1430
Thursday: 7:00-11:00
1330-1430
Friday: Closed
Saturday: Closed

Winter Times

Sunday: 7:30-11:00
1230 -1330
Monday: 7:30-11:00
1230 -1330
Tuesday: 7:30-11:00
1230 -1330
Wednesday: 7:30-
11:00 1230 -1330
Thursday: 7:30-11:00
1230 -1330
Friday: Closed
Saturday: Closed

Booking On Site

No

Booking Online

No

Booking via Phone

No

Advance booking required

No

Agent Voucher Accepted

No

Free For

Free (locals only) , Free for everyone

Fee: Special Group Rate

No

Bathrooms

Free

Handicap bathroom

Yes

Food outlet

Café , Concessionary , Restaurant

Parking

No parking available

Stairs

No

Wheelchair Friendly

Yes

Wheelchair Access Level

Fully accessible

Stroller Friendly

Yes