

# The Islamic Celebration: Eid al-Fitr

## What is Ramadan?

Ramadan is in the ninth month of the Islamic lunar calendar. The festival begins at different times for Muslims, depending on when the new moon is first sighted. It lasts from dawn until sunset for 29 or 30 days. Ramadan is a very important time for Muslims and is celebrated all over the world. During Ramadan, Muslims request forgiveness for sins in the past, pray for direction and try to cleanse themselves through self-control and great acts of faith.

It is a time of fasting for the Islamic people as fasting is one of the Five Pillars or duties of Islam. The Islamic name for this fasting is 'Saum'.

## Why do Muslims fast?

Fasting is intended to help teach Muslims to focus their attention on God, be self-disciplined and generous. It also reminds them of the suffering of the poor, who may rarely get to eat well. The prophet Muhammad set the example of fasting.

Each day during the month of Ramadan, Muslims all over the world abstain from eating and drinking from dawn until sunset. At the end of the day after sunset, Muslim families will often all eat together and celebrate their day of fasting.



## How do Muslims mark the end of Ramadan?

The end of Ramadan is a big celebration called 'Eid al-Fitr': The Festival of the Breaking of the Fast. Muslims celebrate the end of fasting and thank Allah for the strength that he gave them throughout Ramadan. Eid al-Fitr officially begins when the first sight of the new moon is seen in the sky. Traditionally, Eid al-Fitr would commence at the first sight of a sliver of a crescent moon.

## Did you know?

An estimated 2.1 billion Muslims across the globe will celebrate Eid al-Fitr to mark the end of the month-long fasting period of Ramadan - a third of that number are from the African continent.



## How is Eid al-Fitr celebrated?

On the first morning of the celebration, many gather in local mosques or open-air locations for special prayers called Salat al-Eid, and have breakfast. Muslims put on their finest clothes for what will be their first daylight meal in a month. Whilst there, some Muslims will exchange gifts and greeting cards. Celebrations continue for one, two or maybe even three days. People wish each other 'Eid Mubarak' (Blessed Eid) or 'Eid Said' (Happy Eid). Celebrations vary from country to country but usually include gatherings to view the new moon, decorating homes inside and out, family visits, eating special foods, neighbourhood parties and wearing special, new clothes.