**Etiquette for Visiting a Mosque**

* **Remove Your Hat and Shoes:** Hats and sunglasses should always be removed before you actually enter a mosque. Leave your shoes on the rack at the entrance. Some mosques will provide plastic covers for your feet.
* **Be Respectful:** Avoid making loud noises or engaging in unnecessary conversation inside of mosques. Turn off mobile phones, don't chew gum, and do not bring food or drinks inside of a mosque.
* **Do Not Point Feet:** While sitting, avoid pointing your feet in the direction of the *Qibla* - the primary wall inside the mosque indicating the direction of Mecca.
* **Dress Appropriately:** Modest dress is required. Men and women should both cover as much skin as possible; women are required to cover their heads.

**Clothing for Visiting a Mosque**

Perhaps the most important rule of etiquette often ignored by tourists, both men and women are expected to be dressed appropriately before visiting a mosque. Modest dress is the rule of thumb; shirts advertising rock bands, messages, or bright colors should be avoided. Larger mosques in tourist areas will loan proper attire for covering up during your visit.

* **Women:** Women should have all skin covered; ankle-length skirts or pants are required. Sleeves should reach to each wrist and the hair should be covered by a headscarf. Pants or skirts that are too revealing, clingy, or tight should not be worn.
* **Men:** Men should wear long pants and plain shirts without messages or slogans when visiting mosques. Short-sleeved shirts are acceptable as long as the sleeves are not shorter than average. If in doubt, wear long sleeves.

### Entering a Mosque

Sometimes men and women use separate entrances to enter a mosque - look for signs. The typical greeting in Arabic for those entering mosques is "Assalam Allaikum" which means "peace be upon you". The correct return is "Wa alaikum-as-salam" which means "peace be upon you too". Tourists/visitors are obviously not expected to return the greeting, but doing so shows great respect.

It is a Muslim custom to enter a mosque with the right foot first and then exit with the left foot first. Members of the opposite sex should never offer to shake hands upon greeting.

Visiting a mosque is free, however donations are accepted.

### Prayer Times

Followers of Islam are expected to pray five times each day, the position of the sun determines the times; prayer times differ between regions and seasons. In general, tourists should avoid visiting a mosque during prayer times. If present during the prayers, visitors should sit quietly at the back wall without taking photos.

### Photography Inside of Mosques

Photography is permitted inside of mosques, however you should never take pictures during prayer times or of worshipers performing ablutions before the prayer.

## **A Few More Guidelines...**

### Cell phones

A ringing cell phone is a distraction to any service at the mosque--please silence or power-off phones when entering the building.

### Talking during prayer

If you need to talk to someone during the prayer (while you are not praying, of course,) please take the conversation outside the prayer hall into the lobby or hallways so as to not distract those who are praying.

### Not standing/walking in front of someone praying

If you are walking through the prayer area and come across someone who is praying, please walk behind, instead of in front of him.

### Shaking hands with opposite gender

Please be aware that many Muslims do not shake hands with anyone of the opposite gender. That is, men do not shake hands with women, and women do not shake hands with men. Unless he/she extends his/her hand first, it is better to not extend yours.