

JOURNEY TO THE MUSLIM WORLD

FARHANA QAZI



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Chapter 1

Introduction to the Muslim World

More than one billion Muslims live in the world today, spread across all five continents. At least 60 percent live in Asia and 20 percent of Muslims are in the Middle East and Africa.

However, one-fifth of the world's Muslim population also live in countries where Islam is not the majority religion, including India.

Because Islam is the fastest growing religion, it is estimated by 2025, Muslims will surpass other

faith-based communities.

Briefly, Muslims believe in the revelations of all prophets and attest that Prophet Muhammad was the final in a line of prophets, which included Moses, Abraham, and Jesus.

Islam means "peace" and "surrender" and its central idea is to submit to the will of God. Thus, Muslims believe that Islam is a way of life and through the Quran, the holy book, Muslims will be granted a place in Paradise.

Quran 7:156

"My
Mercy
embraces
all things."

For more information on Islam,
read the Quran by Muhammad Asad,
an Austro-Hungarian Jewish scholar who
converted to Islam after visiting the
Middle East in the 20th century.

<https://muhammadasad.com>

Continued...

Introduction to the Muslim World

This is an exciting time to travel to the Muslim world. Through your journey, you will learn more about Muslim communities and discover countries and cities with diverse cultures and traditions. After all, no two Muslim countries are alike.

When you travel, you will discover why. Each Muslim place has its own language, history, ethnic make-up, food, artistic expression, customs, laws, values, and practices of Islam.

This short book offers you a general guide to some of the most beautiful places in the Muslim world that I have travelled to more than once.

The beauty and brilliance of these places is that they are accessible, affordable, and amazing examples of what it is to live among Muslims who understand Islam to be a loving, peaceful, and tolerant faith that welcomes everyone.

Chapter 2

The Most Beautiful Places

Over the past thirty years, I have traveled to different parts of the Muslim world. Each place is unique and memorable. Which is why I have returned to these places to discover peace-loving Muslims proud of their local culture and country.

Surprisingly, with the exception of Kashmir, the places I describe here are peaceful. Which is why they are relatively safe and serene. I begin my journey in the Middle East.

Oman - This small Gulf country feels like an island, set apart from the other Arab states. The capital city of Muscat has a sense of old Arabia with its white-washed homes cradled by dry mud and mountains. This is a modern country with a super tolerant King who welcomes everyone to marvel its warm teal waters and sandy beaches.

United Arab Emirates - No longer a tiny fishing port, Dubai flaunts skyscraper hotels and has a reputation for shopping.

Inside the Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque, Oman



Continued...

The Most Beautiful Places

But there is more to the emirates than man-made islands. What I love most is that each of the seven emirates is different. What they have in common is the hot desert wind and a topaz sun all year round.

Kashmir - Anyone who has visited the bowl-shaped valley has said it is like Paradise on earth or the Wonderland of South Asia. Though divided by arch rivals India and Pakistan, Kashmir's beauty is untouched. The valley

boasts of clear rivers, dense forests, tulip gardens, apple orchards, and best of all, a kind-hearted people. Despite the conflict, the locals will protect you.

Langkawi, Malaysia - This island is a hidden gem called the Jewel of Kedah. Nature lovers will fall in love with its underwater coral gardens, cloaked monkeys, peacocks, and emerald rainforests. Here, the locals welcome tourists all year-round.

The children of Kashmir



The lush green islands in Langkawi, Malaysia



Continued...

The Most Beautiful Places

There are dozens more places in the Muslim world that are stunning, spiritual and open to foreigners.

Morocco - This insanely tolerant country stirs a traveler's imagination. The city of Fez is romantic with a fairytale labyrinth of the medina. You will fall in love with the art treasures and sun-drenched locals.

Turkey - The glory of the Ottoman Empire is felt in the capital city of Istanbul with its imperial touch and

ancient relics from the past. Locals welcome tourists here all year-round.

Pakistan - The headlines are unfair to this country's geographical beauty. Travel to the northern hills to view the Himalaya Mts and Shimla Hills. Locals are friendly enough and can help you climb the slopes.

Indonesia -- Jakarta, named the City of Victory, is the epitome of urban frenzy and a jigsaw of ethnic groups, making the city incredibly diverse.

The blue-white mountains of Shimla Hills, Pakistan.



Chapter 3

Customs & Culture

The term 'Muslim culture' is used broadly to represent many diverse Muslim groups, each with their own variations on customs and traditions. Some of these customs are influenced more by culture than by Islam. Hence, the phrase culture trumps religion.

Despite the diversity, there is a shared belief system and universal cultural norms that practicing, pious Muslims believe in. The most important

aspects of Muslim culture that you will find as you travel are listed here.

Oneness of God - This is the core belief for Muslims. There is no God but God and Muhammad is His Prophet. Muslims believe that Islam is a continuation of Judaism and Christianity.

Prayer - The pathway to God is meditation by way of ritual prayers to remember the Creator. Muslims pray at home, in the mosque, in the workplace, or during travel.

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Customs & Culture

Charity - The Quran mentions charity as an act of purification and a way to grow closer to God. Taking care of one's family, community, guests, travelers, the sick, the poor and orphans are charitable deeds.

Respect for Women - Islam emphasizes equal rights for men and women as they will be judged equally by God. While Muslim countries have different laws for its women, the faith grants women a high

status in the community, especially mothers--the nurturers of families who often make great personal sacrifices to raise loving children.

Honor - Muslims value each member of society, from children to minorities. In the early days of seventh century Arabia, persecuted minorities were the first to embrace Islam because the new faith gave them freedom. Today, all groups deserve respect and love.

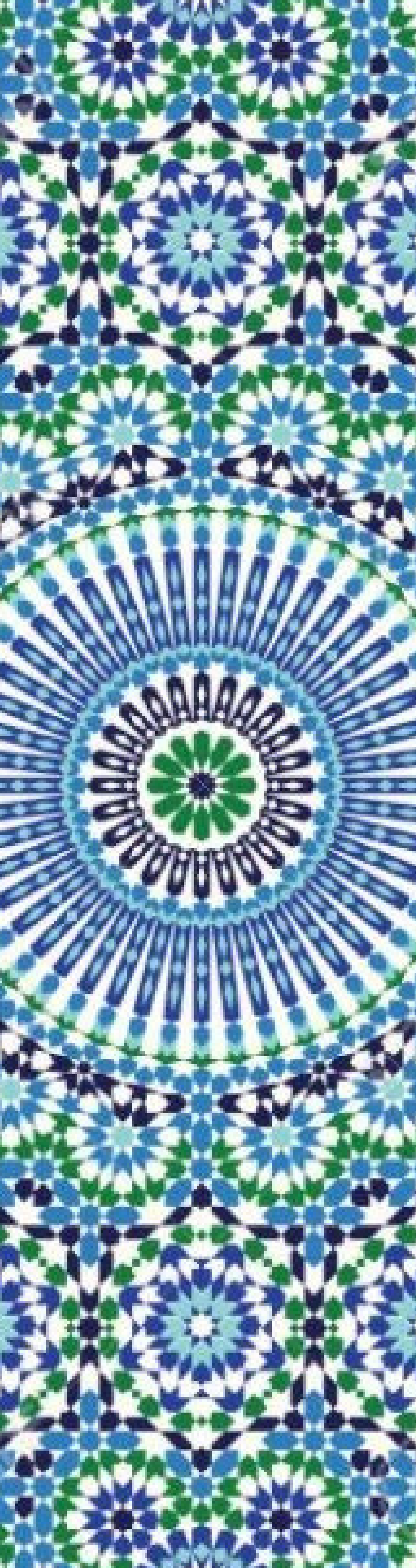
5 More Tips Before Your Journey

Now you know that the Muslim world is a kaleidoscope of cultures and peoples. Because each place in the Muslim world is different, learning about those differences is a key part of the journey.

You can be a smart traveler if you follow these five tips that I use before and during my journey. Each tip is super easy to follow. You can adapt them to the different places you visit in the Muslim world.

Before you go, I recommend learning as much as you can about your next adventure. Be sure to visit your local library or bookstore or online travel sites for specific information about a country or city. Read that country's paper online for the latest news. Connect with natives on social media for other travel tips and insights.

Most of all, have an open mind and heart as you discover the beauty and brilliance of the Muslim world.



TIP 1: LEARN 5 KEY PHRASES

Travel is less stressful if you learn a few key phrases used in the place you are visiting. These key phrases are invaluable:

- Hello (Muslim greeting)
- My name is ...
- How are you?
- Where is (name of place)?
- Thank you.

You can use online language services to help you. Or download language apps on your phone and use it as a reference.

SAY HELLO

Assalamu alaykum

MAY PEACE BE WITH YOU

REPLY:

MAY PEACE BE
WITH YOU TOO

**Wa
alaykum
Salaam**

Say Thank you

SHUKRAN



TIP 2: DO AS THE LOCALS DO

I learned a long time ago that following local customs and respecting local culture is the best way to enjoy my journey in the Muslim world.

If you are a woman, be sure you know the dress code for different countries. You can wear knee-length skirts in Malaysia but not in Kashmir or Oman, which are more conservative places.

Because it's the Muslim world, be sure you know the Islamic calendar so you can plan your trip around religious holidays, such as Ramadan, the fasting month.



TIP 3: TALK TO THE LOCALS

No matter what travel guides may teach you, it's more enjoyable and rewarding to speak to a local. You can do this if you use local transportation, such as a taxi or bus.

Or you can meet locals at a community and/or cultural center. Most visitors are welcome and locals love to show off their culture and country. Because Muslims are known for their hospitality, feel free to engage.

And of course, you can meet locals in restaurants. Most service providers are open to conversations with tourists.



TIP 4: VISIT A MOSQUE & THE MARKET

For a spiritual experience, be sure to visit one or more mosques to appreciate the history, art, culture and practices of Islam. A mosque is more than a building. It is a place of worship where special activities also take place. Remember to dress appropriately and avoid visits during prayer times such as Friday afternoon.

Also try to visit a local market, such as the famous night market in Langkawi, or visit Dubai during the shopping festival and you will discover treasures you won't find anywhere else.



TIP 5: BE SAFE

Some places are safer than others. Although petty theft is a serious crime in the Muslim world, it does happen. Stay safe and lock your valuables, including locking your lab top inside your suitcase or use the hotel safe. Also, it's best to carry small valuables. I prefer a small non-flashy handbag for money and jewelry.

Finally, many places in the Muslim world are modest so try not to attract attention by wearing expensive clothes or jewelry. I try to blend into the local population by wearing local attire and have a headscarf just in case I need to cover.

THANK YOU FOR READING

FEEL FREE TO SHARE
THIS WITH OTHER
TRAVELERS.

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